

## **Brand Heritage and Word of Mouth: The Mediating Role of Brand Personality, Product Involvement and Customer Satisfaction**

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### **Abstract**

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The present study aims to review the effect of brand heritage on its personality. According to Aker (1996) the personalities of the brand are considered as honesty, excitement, efficiency, expertise, and power. The present study has been performed via descriptive-survey method and the population consists of university students who use Adidas brand. 400 questionnaires were distributed among them through stratified random sampling and finally 384 questionnaires were taken back and evaluated. To analyze the data SPSS and Amos software, structural equation modeling was applied. The results show that brand personality has an impact on word of mouth communications in Adidas brand. Also brand personality impacts the customer satisfaction. Honesty and efficiency which are counted as brand personality aspects are influential in customer satisfaction but excitement, expertise and power did not have any effect on it in Adidas brand.

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**Keywords:** Adidas brand, brand heritage, brand personality, product involvement

### **1. Introduction**

The trade mark (brand) has been implemented as one of the most important subjects in marketing management since 1990 and is counted as one of the important and salient aspects in global industry. The powerful trademarks will provide a series of financial and non-financial benefits for companies. These benefits include more loyalty from the customers, more flexibility of the company in facing with environmental crisis, higher profit, development opportunities, trademark expanding and etc. the objective of the researches considering the trademark according to customer's perception is to analyze their reaction to trademark, their perceptions and the total excellence of the products or services opposing other trademarks (Traylor, 1981). Therefore the present study is performed considering the effect of brand heritage on brand personality around Adidas brand.

### **2. The Theoretical Background**

#### **2.1 Brand Heritage**

Brand heritage as a developed concept signifies the issue that how the history, as an aspect which can act as a lever in managing the identity of the trademark and its suggested value, the elements of brand heritage are defined as longevity, the background root of the trademark, the main values and applying the signs and their historical concepts are introduced as crucial factors in the organization (Urde et al., 2007). The mentioned structure concerning the recognition of brand heritage shows how different is the heritage among different marks. In addition, it clarifies the matter that many years of existence it (meaning the longevity) do not automatically lead to brand heritage. In this case, the distinction between having a good background and training the heritage of an identity is enlightened.

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Urde et al (2007) inspiring from Lavental (1998) note the history as a device to realize and define an organization and its brands not only in the past but also in future and also now, emphasizing the active reflection of history. In marketing, such a matter shows that when the history is a key component of the identity of trademark and position, it is treated as a source of competitive benefit (Hudson, 2011).

## 2.2 Word of Mouth

The oral advertisement was first published by "William White" during a marketing classic study in Fortune Magazine. Although studying social networks is extensively discussed in sociology, in recent years due to realizing its obvious impacts on the customer's behavior, it has been noticed by marketing researchers (Moven, 1996).

- The word of mouth communication is an activity which leads the customers in terms of information through giving the information of one customer to another.
- The word of mouth communication presents the motivation and the reason for the people in the society about the services and the products of your company to talk about.
- The word of mouth communication is to create activities and incentives which contribute to develop the word of mouth communication of your products among the people in the society.

The word of mouth communication is a kind of marketing technique which stimulates people in order to express your marketing messages to others. This issue is not a new phenomenon and it has already existed and the marketers today only learn how to use this technique, how to expand and enhance it. Such kind of marketing does not show us the techniques to create a marketing process, but they teach us how to be able to bring our words concerning our products among the common words between the people in the society. Cox (1967) has noted the oral advertisement as an absolutely simple form which is not something higher than a word around products. The term oral advertisement is applied for describing the oral communications (either positive or negative) among the groups such as product renderers, independent experts, family, friends and also the real and the potential customers. Although all these three groups may involve with oral advertisement, most of the researches have focused on real and potential customers (Ennew et al.,2000).

## 2.3 Product Involvement

The concept product involvement mainly derives from social psychology. Krugman brought the concept "product involvement" into marketing and took use of it. He explains about the little effect of product involvement has on TV commercials. Through this little concept as product involvement he had a massive influence not only on advertisements but also on marketing researches concerning the customer's behavior. Afterwards, the issue of product involvement turned into the main part in customer behavior researches. Zaichkowsky (1986) defines the product involvement as the connection between the product with the needs and values of the customer and following the customer's interest about the information related to that product.

## 2.4 kinds of Involvement

The product involvement can be classified as advertisement involvement, the product involvement and the purchase involvement. Totally there are two different kinds of involvements experienced by customers. These two kinds include: 1. the situational involvement 2. Constant involvement. Assail (2006) defines the "situational involvement" as the temporary involvement with a product during a short period and under specific circumstances. In contrast to situational involvement, "the constant involvement" explains a more persistent and stable involvement and having a longer loyalty to a product (Shouli, 2007).

## 2.5 Customer Satisfaction

The customer satisfaction in recent years has been of a great importance and has turned into a crucial subject for marketing managers and specially managers active in service industries (Bennet, 2004). The customer satisfaction is as important for organizations as a satisfied customer is considered as a positive asset for the organization; because through the reuse of the service, repurchasing the product or word of mouth will lead to an increase in the benefit of the organization. To survive in competitive markets the organizations must provide the products and services leading to the satisfaction of customers (Gilbert, 2000). Of the advantages concerning the customer satisfaction include: the increase in transactions and tendency to buy additional services and also the decrease in the cost and the expenses of the transaction (Sullivan, 2012). The growth in the manager's interest toward customer satisfaction has been realized as a tool to evaluate the quality. The high ranking of customer satisfaction in wide range is considered as the best index for the future profitability of the company.

The satisfaction can be determined as an evaluation about the quality of a product after the purchase considering the expectations before the purchase. The customer satisfaction can be experienced via different situations related to the service and the products. The customer satisfaction is an absolutely personal evaluation which is affected to a great extent. The satisfaction according to the customer's satisfaction is in connection with the organization and the personal results. Some researchers consider the satisfied customer in private section as the one received a great amount of added value (Cengiz, 2010). When measuring the customer satisfaction the researchers face a variety of challenges and problems. The satisfaction is calculated as a hidden variable which includes the mental perception of the customers around the quality of the product or services. In addition, measuring the satisfaction is not only in the customer's experience but also in the customer's expectation of the product/ service in terms of quality (Marinkovic, 2011).

Although brands are inanimate elements, the customers consider them having human characteristics. For instance, most customers find Marlboro as a powerful brand in producing cigarette (Sung & Tinkham, 2005). Aaker (1997) defines brand personality as a series of human factors dependent on brand. The thing which is clear is that all brand have personality, and in the company does not design such personality, this personality will be formed in customer's mind gradually. The brand is shaped in the brain and heart of the customer via direct or indirect connections. The direct resource includes the individuals who are somehow connected with brand such as managers, the family members, and the company's spokesperson. And the indirect resources include marketing tactics and data resources such as the features of the product or service, the brand name, the brand symbol, advertisement, the cost and the packaging (Heslop et al., 2010; Park & John, 2011). The companies which take the brand personality as part of their total situational strategy, efficiently, can affect the customer's perception much more than gradual and consistent methods related to communicative strategies (Burke, 1994). Researches about the brand personality are so limited due to the lack of conceptual frameworks and valid and comprehensive scales of evaluation. In this research the comprehensive and valid model of Jennifer Aker has been taken in use. He has designed his model on the basis of three resources including: 1. the personality principals resulted from psychological views, 2. the personality principals used by marketers 3. The principals resulted from qualitative researches in relation with the criteria of famous brands (Avis, 2012). Aker in an extensive research reviewed the way to classify the personality of different brands which resulted in a 5-dimension model including sincerity, excitement, competency, ruggedness and competency. The first three criteria mostly comply with the usual and customary features of people and the other two are mostly connected with desired and ideal personality traits (Heslop et al., 2010).

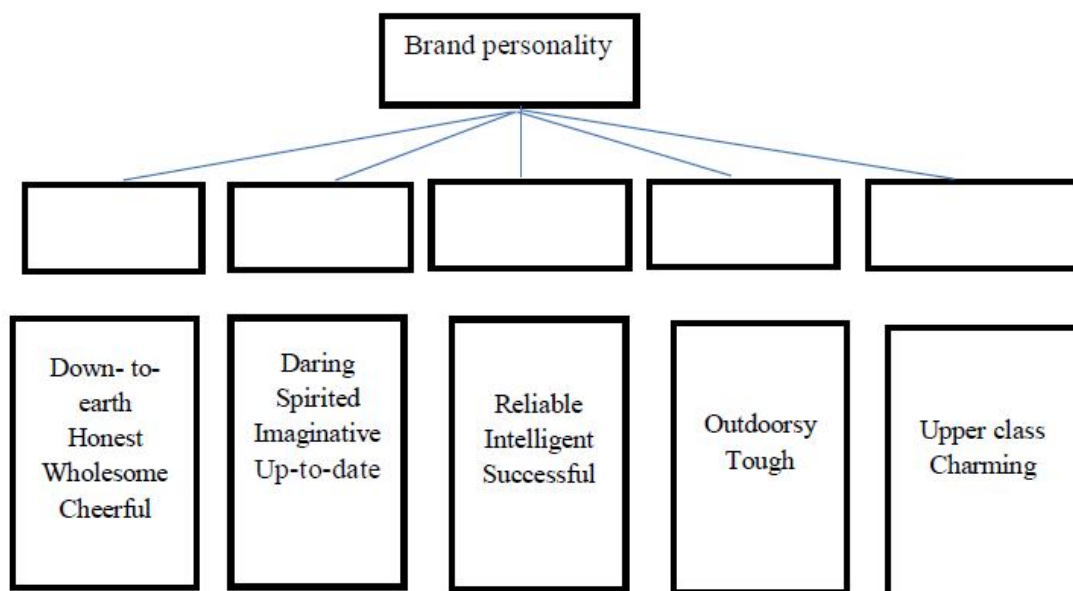


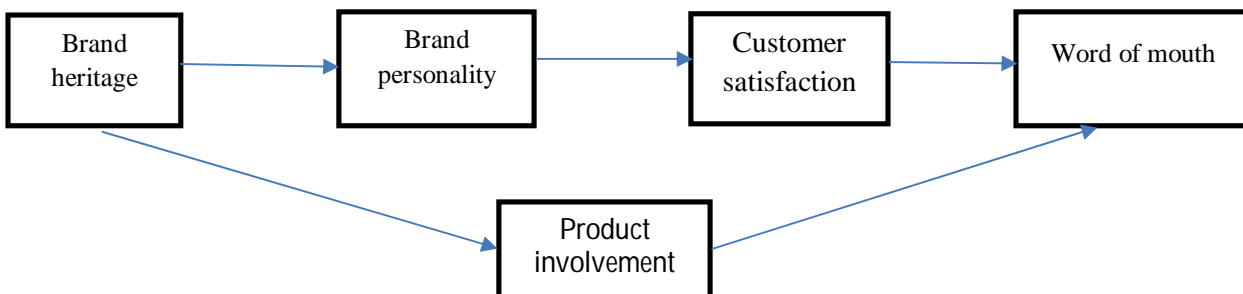
Figure 1: Asker's Brand Personality (1997)

### 3. Literature Review

(Patti & Soyeon, 2000) done a research reviewing the relation between the product involvement of the product and the commitment to the trademark. The objective of this research is to review the issue that if there is relation between the product involvement and the brand commitment and the variables affecting such a relation. The sample in this research includes the University students. In this research the 5 variables, the tendency to product, the product criteria, the data resources, the product involvement, and the commitment to trademark were reviewed. This study introduces the cloth as a product with high involvement and finally selected jeans as part of this class to be reviewed. They have divided the customers in 4 distinctive groups on the basis of the two variables, involvement and commitment and eventually resulted that the product involvement and brand commitment have no significant relation and these customers can be also divided into different groups. Their findings imply that the product involvement and the brand commitment has exclusive structures, but are affected by variables such as product tendency and information resource. Hochgrafe, et al (2012), has reviewed the product involvement in purchasing the product and its effect on brand loyalty among tourists in swish hotels. These researchers except the five involvement aspects (product tendency, the joy based value, the sign value, the risk expectancy, and the risk importance) have reviewed the 3 elements (cognitive element, emotional element, behavioral element) and also the effect of demographic factors (the gender, the education, age and the life period, income and job) on involvement. The results of this research have confirmed a significant relation between involvement and loyalty and also the direct relation between the involvements including the joy of the purchase and the symbolic value were confirmed. Ulla et al., (2011) in a research called applying the brand heritage and cultural heritage state that the brand heritage is known as one of the future priorities in trademark of the research and its adoption is challenging internationally. To maximize its utilization it is necessary to pay attention to the cultural heritage of the target country. On this basis the objective of the present study is to make an operation which is beyond both trademark and cultural heritage. The findings have shown that brand heritage is a mixture of history and also is as the item to empower and continue the main values, the mark and the visual symbols. The cultural value of a country can be considered as congruity and assiduity.

### 4. The Conceptual Model of the Research

The challenge which led the researchers toward the subjects in this paper was to discover and review the role of the brand heritage and the brand personality to comprehensively understand the relations between the structures in this research. According to the ideas mentioned above, giving the suggesting model of figure 2; according to the things mentioned in the hypotheses; the conceptual model and the framework of the research is taken care of.



**Figure 2: The Conceptual Model of the Research**

#### 4.1 Hypotheses

Reviewing the studies about the brand heritage and brand personalities resulted in the following hypotheses:

- Brand heritage impacts brand personality in Adidas brand.
- Brand personality impacts customer satisfaction in Adidas brand.
- Customer satisfaction impacts word of mouth in Adidas brand.
- Brand heritage impacts product involvement in Adidas brand.
- Product involvement impacts word of mouth in Adidas brand.

## 5. Methodology

Studying the related articles and reviewing the research literature and on the basis of researchers the conceptual model of the research was formed and the evaluation indexes were codified. The variables use in the research included: internal marketing (the payments, environment, the employee contribution and management styles) as internal variable and the critical thought of the employees is considered as the external variable. To evaluate the relation between the aspects of the research model there are hypotheses designed. Then to evaluate the research variables a questionnaire was set and designed and was distributed between the statistical sample. According to the test the final hypotheses were formed in which the relation between the research variables was analyzed.

### 5.1 The Population and the Sample Size

The sample size covers all Guilan university students who have used the Adidas brand once at least. University students was chosen because they are the easiest population and they deal with sport and related events more than other groups. Because of the population being unlimited the sampling has been done as Stratified random sampling according to the calculations on the basis of Morgan table (1970), 400 questionnaires were distributed among the customers among which 384 questionnaires were taken back and evaluated.

### 5.2 The Tools

The tool is a 5-section questionnaire which has been codified in five parts including the first part to evaluate the brand heritage, the second part to evaluate the word of mouth communication, the third part to evaluate the product involvement, the fourth part to evaluate the satisfaction and the fifth part to evaluate the brand personality according to the research variables and through consulting with the experts and studying the previous researches. The first of the brand heritage questionnaire includes 13 questions, and the second part of the questionnaire is the word of mouth communication with 3 questions, the third part is about product involvement with 4 questions and the fourth part is about satisfaction has 3 questions and finally the fifth part is about the brand personality with 41 questions is considered close and with five-option Likert spectrum. To determine the reliability of the questionnaire the chronbach Alpha was used via SPSS software. In table 1 the chronbach Alpha coefficient for each of the variables has been mentioned. Through descriptive statistics every single questions of the demography was reviewed and then using the statistical tests such as Spearman's correlation test, the data was analyzed taking advantage of SPSS and AMOS software.

**Table 1: Chronbach Alpha Coefficient of the Variables**

Variable	Chronbach Alpha Coefficient
Brand heritage	0.87
Word of mouth communication	0.73
Product involvement	0.89
satisfaction	0.91
Brand personality	0.81

### 5.3 The Data Analysis

The demographic features are shown in table 2.

**Table 2: The Sample Demographic Features**

Gender	female	Male	
Frequency	45.3%	54.4%	
Age (year)	20-30	30-40	40-50
Frequency	95.1%	3.9%	1%
Education	BA	MA	PhD
Frequency	91.9%	7.3%	0.5%

5.4 The results of Spearman’s Correlation Test

To test the relation of the research variables the Spearman’s correlation test is used and since the variables are qualitative, SPSS software was used to analyze the data. The results of Spearman’s correlation test are shown in table 3.

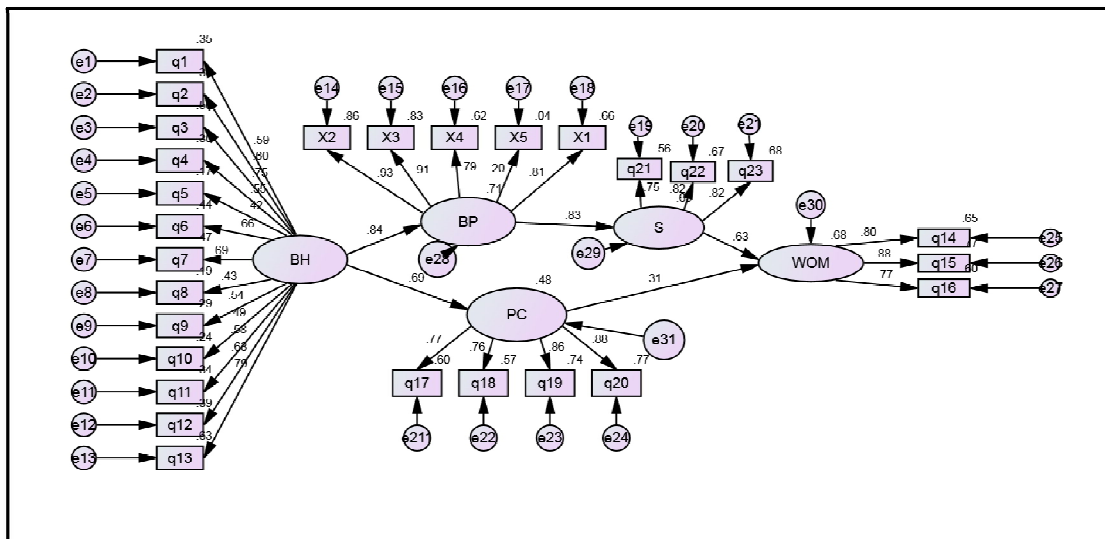
**Table 3: The Variables Correlation**

	Brand heritage	Brand personality	Brand satisfaction	Word of mouth communication	Significance level
<b>Brand heritage</b>	1				0.00
<b>Brand personality</b>	0.63	1			0.00
<b>Brand satisfaction</b>	0.58	0.68	1		0.00
<b>Word of mouth communication</b>	0.59	0.60	0.59	1	0.00

On the basis of the reports of the software and since the significance level between two variables, brand heritage and brand personality is lower than 0.05 there is a significant relation between the brand heritage and brand personality. Also the significance level between the brand personality and word of mouth communication is lower than 0.05, therefore, there is a significant and positive relation. The significance level between the three aspects of the brand personality (honesty, excitement, efficiency expertise and word of mouth communications is reported lower than 0.05 and between these aspects and word of mouth communication there is positive and significant relation, but the relation between the power and word of mouth communication is not significant because the significance level is reported higher than 0.05.

5.5 The Research Model Based on the Structural Models

To review the effect of the two variables, brand heritage ( as dependent variable) and brand personality (as independent variable) in this research, using Amos21 software the modeling method of the structural equations was used according to figure 2. The variable PH shows the Brand Heritage and BP shows the Brand Personality and X1, X2, X3, X4, X5 show the honesty, excitement, efficiency, expertise and the power, respectively. S shows the variable Satisfaction, PI shows the variable Product Involvement and WOM shows Word of Mouth communication.



**Table 3: Modeling the Structural Equations (the Significance Coefficients and Confirmatory Factor Loading)**

To review the appropriateness of structural equations 6 indexes were reviewed. The first is (df/X2), if this index is between 1 to 3, it is a sign of higher confirmation of this model. In this research this amount is reported as 2.57. The second index is RMSEA which the more it is close to 0.05; the more functional the model will be which is reported as 0.068.

The other four indexes are GFI, IFI, NFI and CFI which are between 0 and 1 and the closer to 1, the more functional the model will be. In this model these indexes are 0.85, 0.87, 0.81 and 0.87 respectively. In table 4, the index and the measurements of the structural equations model is presented.

**Table 4: The Indexes and Measurements of the Structural Equation modeling I**

X2/df	GFI	IFI	NFI	CFI	RMSEA
2.57	0.85	0.87	0.81	0.87	0.068

Table5 shows the causal analysis using structural equation modelling for the hypotheses test. In Amos software, confirming or rejecting the hypotheses is shown by CR or P. in the index CR is higher than 1.96 and P is lower than 0.05 it show the existence of a causal relation between the variables and the hypothesis is confirmed. The results of this model are shown in table5.

**Table 5: The Results of the Factor Analysis of Structural Equations**

Hypotheses	T-value	Standard coefficient	Result
Brand heritage impacts brand personality in Adidas brand.	3.21	0.55	supported
Brand personality impacts customer satisfaction in Adidas brand.	4.07	0.21	supported
Customer satisfaction impacts word of mouth in Adidas brand.	2.99	0.17	supported
Brand heritage impacts product involvement in Adidas brand.	8.65	0.89	supported
Product involvement impacts word of mouth in Adidas brand.	2.07	0.64	supported

According to the results the hypotheses are supported.

## 6. Conclusion

The objective of the present essay was to review the brand heritage and the brand personality in Adidas brand. The results of the structural equations supported the presented conceptual model and also the hypotheses and showed that there is a relation between the brand heritage and the brand personality which means the increase in one will lead to a growth in another. Also the results of the other hypotheses showed that the brand personality impacts customer satisfaction in Adidas brand. Also customer satisfaction impacts word of mouth communications in Adidas brand. To review the appropriateness of structural equation model, the six indexes GF, IFI, NFI and CFI, RMSEA and (df/X2) were located in an acceptable level. The confirmatory analysis coefficients showed that none of the questions were lower than 0.30 and it was confirmed, in other words, the data supports the pattern well. The results of Spearman's correlation test showed that there is a positive and significant relation between the brand heritage and the brand personality. Ulla et al (2011) state that the brand heritage is a mixture of history and also is as consistency and continuity maker of the main values, the product mark and the visual symbols. On the basis of the reports of the software and since the significance level between two variables, brand heritage and brand personality is lower than 0.05 there is a significant relation between the brand heritage and brand personality. Also the significance level between the brand personality and customer satisfaction is lower than 0.05, therefore, there is a significant and positive relation. The significance level between the three aspects of the brand personality (honesty, excitement, efficiency, expertise and customer satisfaction is reported lower than 0.05 and between these aspects and customer satisfaction there is positive and significant relation, but the relation between the power and customer satisfaction is not significant because the significance level is reported higher than 0.05. the results also supported the third hypothesis, based on which there is a positive relation between customer satisfaction and word of mouth. The results also have shown that the relation between brand heritage and product involvement is positive and significant. According to the results, the product involvement (complexity) is the result of the direct relation with the customer's purchasing decision. Huchgraf et al (2008) showed that there is a significant relation between the involvement and loyalty. In Warinton and Shim's point of view they have a unique product involvement and brand loyalty, but they are affected by the variables such as the product tendency and the data resources of the brand. The brand is directly or indirectly shaped in the heart and the mind of the customers. The direct resources which forms the brand personality as the people who are connected to brand in some way. Word of mouth communications also is an activity which guides the customers by giving the information of one customer to another.

The results showed that the realism, handsomeness and the profitability of Adidas brand lead to customer satisfaction for this brand, in other words the increase in the honesty in brand personality will lead to increase in customer satisfaction have. But the features like creative energy and modernity of this brand have not been able to customer satisfaction. Therefore; it is recommended to give more attention to this aspect which is related to the excitement and the second subsidiary question. Being trusty, intelligent and successful about Adidas brand has affected customer satisfaction as well. The expertise as the fourth variable and also the fourth subsidiary hypothesis has not been able to impact the customer satisfaction meaning that being prestigious and attractiveness of Adidas brand has not been as much as it can be effective customer satisfaction. The power as the fifth aspect in this research has not also been effective on customer satisfaction, in other words, the power and the strength of Adidas brand has not been effective on customer satisfaction in Adidas brand. The fifth hypothesis is also supported which means that there is a positive relationship between product involvement and word of mouth.

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