The Preliminary Investigation of Brands' Advertising Personality on Young Viewers' Perceptions

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ABSTRACT   *Most of the multinational companies believe that advertising plays a crucial role in building a brand. Developing and maintaining a powerful brand in the fullest sense requires a convincing promise of value/benefit for consumers and conforming that the promise is kept. Mostly, the literature reviews brand personality as one of the core dimensions of the brand identity and perhaps as the closest variable to the consumers' buying process. All marketing communication tools, especially advertising, are pivotal to create awareness, influence and form a desire to buy a specific brand. This paper attempts to explore the tendency to present how one company manages to create two different brand personalities on the same sector that are supported by advertising.*

Keywords: *Brand personality, advertising personality, Turkey's personal care market, perceptual mapping*

1. INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of 'branding' role is well understood in advertising especially forming a positive attitude towards a specific product. A brand –an intangible asset- is the most valuable asset of companies. Manufacturer and retailer companies have built up brand value through the development of a differentiated brand personality, a long-term bond with its customers and creating reputation backed up by advertising and other forms of brand communication support tools. Advertising is a form of communication. In a sense it is not a conversation but it is an effective tool to get attention, provide information with entertainment, persuade, remind, influence and try to create a response, such as a sale (Cook, 2001). Most of the marketing efforts are focused on what customers want and need rather than what they really are. Personal traits haven't been the major factor for marketers but they lead a proper understanding of the cluster of customers in a market segment. In order to ensure that advertisements are able to reach the target group, advertisers need to select the right medium.

2. THE THEORETICAL DIMENSION OF BRAND PERSONALITY

Branding especially brand personality have been topics of interest for many years. According to Kotler (2000) a brand can be defined as ``a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or combination of them which is intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or

group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors".

Aaker (1997) defined brand personality as ''the set of human characteristics associated with a brand''. Simply, if a brand were a person, how would it be described? Moreover, brand personality is given power for marketers in order to visualize how it is look like and does it reflect the same image of the buyer. According to Keller (1993); marketers should try to concern personality with how people attach a human personality to the brand itself, rather than to what the brand does. Brand personality is perhaps as the closest variable to the consumers' buying process.

Mostly, brand personality has mixed by the term brand identity. Kapferer (1998) defined 'brand identity' as underlining the significance of the supply side perspective on the brand concept: 'before knowing how we are perceived, we must know who we are '.

In the literature, there are many studies that underscore building strong and accurate personalities of the brands. Birdwell (1964) investigated the relationship between self-concept and perceived personality of cars. Parallel to Birdwell, Dolich (1969) researched the influence of perceived personality of cars on consumers' self-image. However, due to a lack of common theory and consensual taxonomy of personality attributes to describe products and brands, differently, Aaker (1997), developed the big five model of human personality as the brand personality scale (BPS), which consists of five generic dimensions. This theory has proposed that people prefer objects whose psychological characteristics are congruent with their own psychological characteristics.

Aaker's (1997) brand personality dimensions have been widely implemented using various consumer brands within different product categories and across different cultures. In Turkey, Aksoy & Ozsomer (2007) have adopted the five dimensions of brand personality scale to Turkish culture: Excitement-daring, spirited, imaginative, up-to-date-, Sincerity-domestic, honest, cheerful, genuine-, competence-, Sophistication-glamorous, presentations, charming, romantic-and Ruggedness-tough, strong, outdoorsy, rugged-

A well established brand personality influences consumer preference and develops stronger emotional ties, trust, and loyalty with the brand (Fournier, 1998). Similarly, a distinctive and emotionally attractive advertisement personality is shown to leverage the perceived image of advertising and influence consumer choice behavior.

3. THEORIES ABOUT ADVERTISEMENT PERSONALITY

Advertising creates visibility for a brand through exposure, attention, pulling power, making an impression and engraving a mental note (Wells et al, 2006). Television (TV) advertisement is generally considered the most effective mass-market advertising format. TV advertisement conveys a message to market a product or service. Consumers are suggested as active receptors to persuasion attempts. Unsurprisingly, several studies have shown that consumers have both positive and negative attitudes toward advertising. On the positive side, advertising is seen as entertaining, informative, persuasive and playing a suitable role in the economy. On the negative side, it is perceived as manipulative, possibly corrupted, and boosting materialism (Meenaghan, 2001).

The importance of advertising is forming an awareness and knowledge in memory to consumer decision-making process. Understanding the content and structure of a brand through advertisement may influence what comes to mind when a consumer thinks about a brand (Keller, 1993).

There is a general understanding of communication tool effect under conditions of 'high involvement' is different than under 'low involvement'. Individuals focus their cognitive resources on a limited number of stimuli in the environment. Advertisement is a powerful stimuli for brands. While processing any information, individuals must decide on which stimuli to attend to and the amount of attention to devote to (Mitchell, 1981). This brings the issue of getting involved with a specific brand in order to get curious about its flow of information. After all, the meaning of an ad is created in the perception of the viewer who receives the message, and it might be different from the advertiser's intended response (Stern, 1991). Consumer researchers have defined involvement in terms of specific issue or product under consideration (Lastovicka and Gardner, 1979). If a consumer has a high interest level to advertised brand than high involvement will appeal to advertisement's content.

According to empirical evidence, the effectiveness of every advertisement is increased when the message is tailored to the different personality types rather than to demographic categories. Each personality trait is associated with certain attitudes. Hence, the five personality traits (agreeableness, extraversion, neuroticism, openness to experience and conscientiousness) (De Raad, 2000) are the key issues to be understood in order to pursue an attitude for a particular product/brand. These traits identify the degree of each factor that an individual possesses.

Extraversion represents a preference to be around others. It is the trait that deals with a person's social behaviors, willingness to express opinions and leadership. Agreeableness describes how we relate to others including tolerance and acceptance. In addition, agreeableness represents an eagerness for communion. Conscientiousness refers to a tendency to push toward goals and act dutifully. It encompasses self-discipline and dependability. Neuroticism is the tendency to experience unpleasant emotions and often is referred to as the anxiety factor. Openness to experience describes the willingness to enjoy new experiences and ideas. It includes creativity, preference for the complex and willingness to accept change (De Raad, 2000).

The level of involvement of the viewer with the product and the expertise of the source are positively correlated with the influence of personal traits. It is logical to highlight that different people may have different preferences, and may form positive attitude when exposed to an advertising stream that matches their personality and interest. Gender differences might also be conveyed that men and women perceive others in different manners. Both men and women tend to consult on male traits like ambitious and aggressive, while they tend to attribute to women traits like caring and giddy (Schneider et al, 1979). However, marketers are still struggling to find ways to evaluate the natural impact of advertisements on especially young adult females while purchasing a specific brand. So, it is important to develop insights into the young adult females' comprehension process, while

creating content and intent of advertisements of the influential products to form positive socialization in the modern society.

4. TURKEY'S PERSONAL CARE PRODUCTS MARKET

The popularity of using personal care and cosmetic products have increased globally both for males and females. Despite the fact that the personal care products are increasingly used by females at all ages, especially young age girls are more attracted to place interest in these products because of social consequences of younger beautification and maintaining their self-images (Norudin et.al, 2010). The changing lifestyles, increasing number of working women, nature of socialization, willing to have a good looking appearance and the geographical factors of where they are living in have led the sector to sustainable development and growth. According to Cash and Cash (1982), women use cosmetic and personal care products to express more positive body image and self-image. Naturally, these products offer a solution to look more stylish and beautiful. Besides the persuasion of creating personal identity with related care products, always being presentable to others is crucial among people.

Even though, the negative impact of the global financial crisis in 2008-2010 in most of the sectors, the cosmetic and personal care products industry have been growing extensively around the world, especially in Turkey. On the macro level, the constant economic growth improvements in income distribution and on the micro level increases in advertising spending of major player have directed the Turkish consumers to spend more on care related products. The annual demand in Turkey is estimated approximately about 2.5-2.9 billion USD. Many international cosmetics and personal care brands have launched in Turkey in past years for potential growth variations. In addition to strong local manufacturers, there are also already established multi-national giants such as; Procter & Gamble, Henkel, Colgate, Palmolive and Unilever (BKP Consulting Report, 2012).

According to the Turkey Ministry of Economy Report (2012), the potential growth of the sector and its young population with admiration for western life style has increased the average personal care and cosmetic products spending per capita from $13 to $25 a few years ago. In comparison to all care products, hair care products have the largest share in the sector. Especially, shampoo market represents around 59% of the hair care products. Specifically shampoo market has experienced a boom in the last ten years.

Furthermore, the continuing upward trend in using cosmetics and personal care products has attracted local and well known brands for expanding regionally. Despite the increase in demand for care products, not much is known how consumers' characteristics and usage patterns influence the perception of the generated brands.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSIS

The sampling methodology is based on a convenience sampling with a number of 250 female university student participants in Istanbul; out of %47 are a sample with a monthly income of 2000-5000 TL.

http://www.ajit-e.org/?menu=pages&p=details_of_article&id=181

A survey measuring advertising and brand personality is conducted to 250 female young adults who have watched video clips of two television advertisements of two different personal care brands of Unilever. Unilever is among the many multinational consumer goods company that have massive global recognition especially on personal care products. In both commercials; Dove and Elidor, Unilever has used celebrity endorsement as one of the main channels of communicating its brands to consumers. The main characters of the commercials were chosen from a prime time historical Turkish soap opera television series "The Magnificent Century". Mahidevran and Hurrem sultans are the main characters in the soap opera as being the favorites of Ottoman Empire Sultan Suleyman. Hurrem sultan has risen from being a rebellious harem girl to eventually the only legal wife of Suleyman. On the other hand, Mahidevran's obsessive jealousy of Hurrem has disfavored her. This animosity between Hurrem and Mahidevran has carried on to the advertised brands to attract consumers' attention. The respondents were exposed to the two commercials (Hurrem-Elidor ; Mahidevran: Dove) to create correlation between brands' personality and the soap opera characters of Mahidevran and Hurrem.

This study pinpoints that exploring young adults and their perceptions of advertising and specific brands can provide useful tools for marketers to provide special insight into gauging consumer perceptions and developing successful brand strategies.

Dove- Brand Personality Perceptual Mapping
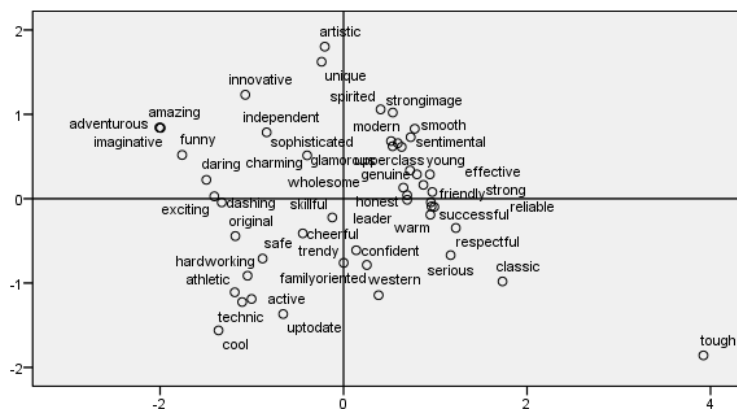
**Elidor- Brand Personality Perceptual Mapping**
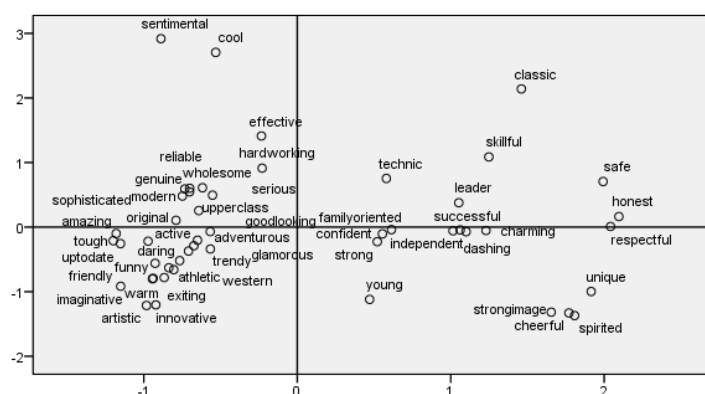
According to Euclidean Model results it can be easily seen that Unilever has succeed in creating two different personalities for its two different brands. According to perceptual mappings of Dove and Elidor, brand personality of two brands is sharply differed from each other.

Considering perceptual mapping; Dove is declared "tough" is seen as quite distinct from other personality dimensions. Whereas "dashing", "honest", "friendly", "reliable and "exciting" are types of personality which could be considered same degrees.

Here, as Elidor described in the personal mapping "confident", "charming", "respectful", "successful", "family oriented" are perceived to be similar to each other. Also "amazing", "original", "good looking" are assumed same. However, the "sentimental and "cool" is seen as quite distinct from other personality dimensions.

Thus, respondents as a group perceived that "sentimental" and "cool" fits Elidor whereas for Dove they declared "artistic" and "unique".

Comparison between Elidor and Dove ads. Personalities
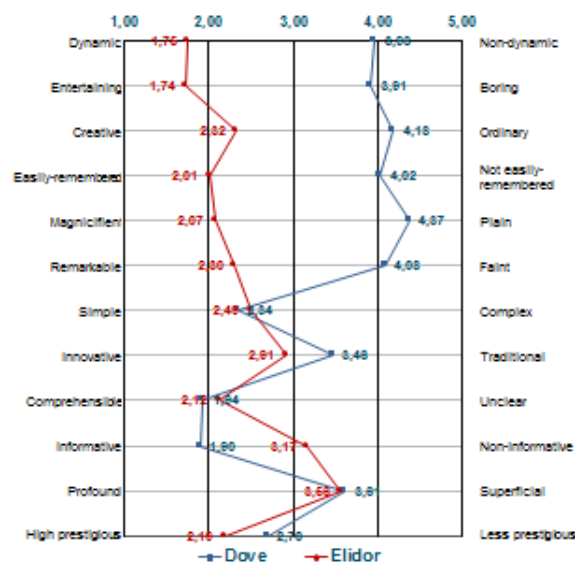
Comparison between two ads; Elidor is highly rated as entertaining, dynamic, creative, easily-remembered, magnicifient, remarkable, highly prestigious whereas Dove is considered as plain, ordinary, faint, not-easily remembered, non-dynamic, informative respectively.

6. FURTHER RECOMENDATIONS AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this study, brand personality and advertising effects are researched in the context of personal care products. Based on the findings, advertising is one of the important tools to vitalize personalities in consumers' mind. Since having without clear brand personalities,

products meet only their physical needs that can be replaced also by many other substitutes. A brand means an image, a life style, a friend that cannot be easily replaced by the others.

On the other hand, to compete in different market segments, different brand personalities are required. Besides that, clarifying unique advertising messages, firms with multi-brands like Unilever can easily reach different places in same markets at the same time.

Comparing two advertisements, it is observed that Unilever succeed in differing personalities of two well-known shampoo brands. For instance, it is observed that the advertising helps in building and nurturing the brand personality in the competitive markets.

Since the constraints of this study include the university students in Istanbul, it may be recommended that the research can be applied to consumers who have different socio-economic profiles and characteristics. Besides, comparison between different brands and product categories can be recommended to be conducted in future researches.

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