

The moderating role of brand familiarity and product involvement in the relationship between brand personality and persuasive advertising elaboration

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Abstract:

Managers have realized that brand personality is one of the most valuable tool that the company use to keep its identity, positioning and maintain its competitive advantage.

This paper seeks to examine how perceptions of brand personality traits can be influenced by persuasive advertising elaboration in the case of three routes of persuasion (central, transitional and peripheral). It appears that few studies have empirically investigated this topic.

In the basis of a literature review, we proposed a conceptual model which includes persuasive advertising as an antecedents of brand personality as well as two moderating variables (brand familiarity and product involvement). Results of An empirical study conducted among 1200 persons confirm that persuasive advertising elaboration plays a key role on the attribution of brand personality traits and the moderating role of brand familiarity and product involvement.

Key words: Brand personality- persuasive advertising- brand familiarity- product involvement.

Introduction

Brand personality is one of the most important dimensions of brand equity (Faircloth, 2005). It is a strategic tool as a company's key differentiator (Sung & Kim, 2010) for the development of strong brands (Aaker, 1997; Keller and Lehman, 2003), thus, helping firms to obtain a sustainable competitive advantage (Biel, 1993). In addition, brand personality enhances relationship between consumer and brand (Belk, 1988) which can create a favorable attitude towards a brand (Ambroise, 2005).

Since the seminal work of Aaker (1997), this concept has received increasing attention among researchers and advertiser (Ferrandi et al , 2003; Ang and Lim, 2006; Vernet, 2008; Valette-Florence et al., 2009; Maehle et al., 2011; Merabet and Benhabib, 2012; Merabet, 2013; Borzooei and Asgari, 2013 ; etc.). A distinct, desirable and sustainable personality has become therefore an important objective in the context of brand management (Siguaw et al., 1999). As such, marketers need to define the brand personality carefully to be sure that consumers perceive their brand as expected (Burnett and Hutton, 2007). However, according to Plummer (1984), brand personality has two sides , the "input" corresponding to what we want consumers think and feel towards the brand and, the "output" which corresponds to the real feelings of consumers towards the brand. A gap between these two sides will have important consequences on the evaluation of the brand. It is therefore important to control the inference sources of brand personality features. Furthermore, the antecedent of this concept are insufficiently examined (Pantin - Sohier 2009), even in the Algerian context; hence the need for a real examination of this topic.

Perceptions of brand personality traits can be influenced by any direct or indirect experiences that consumers have with brand (Plummer, 1984; Batra et al., 1993). Marketing

communication is probably one of the most important sources of inference (Plummer, 1984; Batra et al, 1993). Indeed, from the beginning, studies have focused mostly on communication as a source of brand personality (Azoulay and Kapferer, 2003). Advertisers pointed out that a good communication policy must transmit the main person's brand attributes (Verette, 2008). Some models have identified the undeniable influence of advertising (Siguaw et al., 1999; Venable et al., 2003; Rjagopal, 2006). Furthermore, our research aims to show the direct role that can have persuasive advertising routes, taken consciously or unconsciously by consumers on their perceptions of brand personality traits. The main problem of this research can then be structured around the following question: what is the effect of persuasive advertising treatment on the brand personality traits (BP)?

So, this paper is structured as follows: in the first section we shall review the concept of brand personality and the research on its antecedent in particular the role of persuasive advertising upon which we build our research model . In the second section we present the research methodology, findings and policy implications.

1. Literature review

1.1 Brand Personality Concept

The brand personality concept is recognized by both practitioners and academics from the 50s. Many marketing researchers (Allen and Olson, 1995; Fournier, 1995, 1998) have not hesitated to personify the brand and see it as a partner with which consumer can build a real relationship.

Definition

Aaker was the pioneer in the definition and the development of a specific scale for this concept in the late 1990s. As in the case of human personality, there is no real consensus on the

definition of brand personality concept. In 1997, Aaker defined for the first time the brand personality as “the *set of human characteristics associated with a brand*”. Criticism was addressed by Azoulay and Kapferer (2003) that argue that this definition is too broad because, on one hand, Aaker (1997) considers the brand personality as a global concept and not as a facet of brand identity which can cause a muddle between multiple facets of brand identity , and , on the other hand , some items of Aaker’s BPI are not within the area of the personality, for example : the items " competent" or "feminine" do not cover the personality traits but are considered as human characteristics . Hence, the authors emphasize the need for a stricter definition and Azoulay (2008) proposes the following definition: "*the set of human personality traits applicable and relevant to brands*". Ambroise (2005) also finds this definition too large because there are some brand-specific traits (eg: *sophistication*) that are not relevant to persons and others that correspond to social judgments such as “Small-town”. Thus, she defines it as “*the set of traits of human personality associated to a brand*”.

Unlike the restrictive definitions of this concept , others researchers continued in the same line of Aaker (1997),for example, Batra et al. (1993) recommend expanding the brand personality concept beyond the human personality characteristics (such as origin) because they are important in assessing the brand personality.

In our research, we adopt the broad approach of brand personality because the trait concept is not clear (John and Srivastava 1999) and some human characteristics associated with the brand may have a managerial relevance (Davies and Chun, 2003; Grohmann, 2009; Ghantous, 2010).

1.2 Antecedent of brand personality

Despite the importance of this concept, only few researchers have tackled it (Pantin - Sohier, 2009). Fournier (1998) notes

that all traits inferences built by consumer on the basis of repeated observations of brand behavior made by the marketing manager represent the brand personality. So all forms of expression have an impact on consumer's brand perception (Ladewein and Koebel, 2005). Indeed, brand personality traits are created in different ways and with many tools (Pantin - Sohier 2009).

At first, communication was the principle source of trait inferences (Azoulay and Kapferer, 2003). Recently, brand personality antecedent's include all variables of the mix marketing (Batra et al, 1993; Fournier, 1998; Rajagopal, 2006) and other variables related to brand strategy. Any direct or indirect contact that the consumer has with brand is a source of inference traits of brand personality (Plummer, 1984; Ferrandi et al, 1999; Ambroise, 2005). So perceptions of brand personality traits can be formed directly or indirectly (Batra et al., 1993):

Direct sources: through the people who represent it, such as the typical user of brand, the company's employees, and the brand's endorsers. We can also add direct consumer experience with brand, Because personality traits are brand associations and Keller (1993) considers the direct consumer experience with brand as a direct antecedent of brand associations.

Indirect sources: through the entire marketing mix of brand: Its price (high or low, odd or even), product formulation (ingredients, benefits), product form (solid/liquid, etc.), packaging details (color, size, material, shape), symbol used in all phases of brand communication, sales promotion, media advertising, etc.(Batra et al, 1993).

Other antecedents have been identified in literature (Aaker, 1996; Aaker, 1997; Batra et al., 1993; Keller, 1993; Plummer, 1984): The advertising illustrations, advertising text,

advertising style, brand age, the brand name, symbols and logos, photographic techniques, colors, firm associations, company image, country of origin, cultural symbols, emotions and feelings evoked, music, packaging, product form, locations in stores and typography. In our research we focus mainly on the role of persuasive advertising defined by Falcy (1997) as the set of psychological mechanisms initiated by the spread of advertising, on the treatment of the ads or product described in this ads which may cause a change of attitude towards the communicated brand.

1.3 Hypotheses

1.3.1 The direct influence of persuasive advertising on brand personality

Since the brand communicates, it acquires a character that gives it a personality (Pantin – Sohier, 2004). There is indeed a strong link between communication and consumer perception of brand personality (Van Rekom et al. , 2006). So, brand personality is very influenced by communication (Lizotte , 2007) and advertising is widely used in the process of creating the brand personality. It is considered one of the most effective communication tool (Brassington & Pettitt , 2000). The use of celebrities in advertising is probably the best source of inference of personality traits. Although this practice is still popular (Redenbach , 2000) , any form of advertising influences the brand personality and not only when an endorser is used (Rajagopal , 2006). The role of persuasive advertising in the formation of brand personality traits has been proven by many researchers (Wysong (2000); Lisotte (2007), Keller (2003), Ouwersloot et Tudorica (2001), Okazaki (2006) ; Ang and Lim (2006); Reigner (2007); Park et al, 2005 ; etc.). However, it appears that no previous research has evolved in exploring the role of routes of persuasion in assigning personality traits of brands.

Persuasion models of multiple routes in particular ELM model (Petty & Cacioppo 1983, 1986) indicate that the consumer chooses the route of persuasion which corresponds more or less to a degree of people's information elaboration of advertisement (Petty & Cacioppo 1983, 1986). The central route: The consumer is motivated and process information is depth, his reaction is cognitive and analytical; Peripheral route: The consumer is slightly involved and therefore forms its attitude on the basis of peripheral elements in advertising, his reaction is more emotional and affective.

Petty and Cacioppo (1983) present the central and peripheral routes as two extremes of a continuum of probability elaboration. In general, the peripheral route prepares the central route if one of the peripheral element leads to a depth treatment of the message (Grunert, 1996; Guizon-Helme, 2001). Furthermore, moderate levels of involvement may lead consumers to follow the two routes at the same time so that the quality of arguments and the attractiveness of peripheral indicators influence both attitudes (Homer, 1990; Miniard et al 1993).

In the remainder of this research, we shall refer to three routes, the central, peripheral and transitional route; this latter is the result of a moderate involvement. This characterization of "transitional" is justified by reference to some authors that suggested that we can consider the two routes, in some situations, as interdependent (Borgida and Howard- Pitney, 1983; Chaiken et al, 1989). Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of persuasion process used in our research.

Table 1: Routes of persuasion studied in this research

	Central Route	Transitional Route	Peripheral Route
Process	- A depth treatment of informations	-Selective treatment of information	-Automatic treatment of information
Antecedents	High implication	Moderate implication	Low implication
Nature of	Cognition	Cognition+Affect	Affect

process			
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Therefore, hypothesis 1 can be formulated as follows:

H1: A change in the treatment of persuasive advertising (peripheral, transitional or central) modifies the perception of the BP.

1.3.2 The moderating role of brand familiarity

Brand familiarity is one of the variable mostly used in advertising persuasion research (Tellis, 1997). Compared with unfamiliar or unknown brands, familiar brands have a more elaborate and complex memorial network in the consumer mind (Kent and Kellaris, 2001; Kumar and Krishnan,2004) due to a large number of direct or indirect experiences with brands (Zinkhan and Muderrisoglu, 1985). Brand familiarity allows the encoding and retrieval of information about the brand (Parguel , 2009) because in the treatment of information process, consumers give more attention to familiar stimuli (Hoyer and MacInnis 2007). According to Martinez and Chernatony (2004) , brand familiarity influences all consumer brand perceptions. So we can consider that persuasive advertising has a smaller influence on the perception of personality traits of a familiar brand because consumers have already some ideas about the brand, but in the case of unfamiliar brand, perception of personality traits will be based only on advertising and its content. Therefore, hypothesis 2 can be formulated as follows:

H2 : The brand familiarity moderates the relationship between persuasive advertising and brand personality.

1.3.3 The moderating role of product involvement

The product involvement is also used as a moderator variable in advertising persuasion research. A high product involvement can affect :

- Effort of understanding by increasing cognitions related to the product in order to assess the relevance of arguments (Mitchell

and Olson, 1981) , which leads the consumer to take the central route in order to form beliefs and judgment about brand (Petty et al , 1983 . MacKenzie et al , 1986).

- Perception of novelty in a way that a new stimulus will be more easily understood (Mercanti - Guerin, 2005).

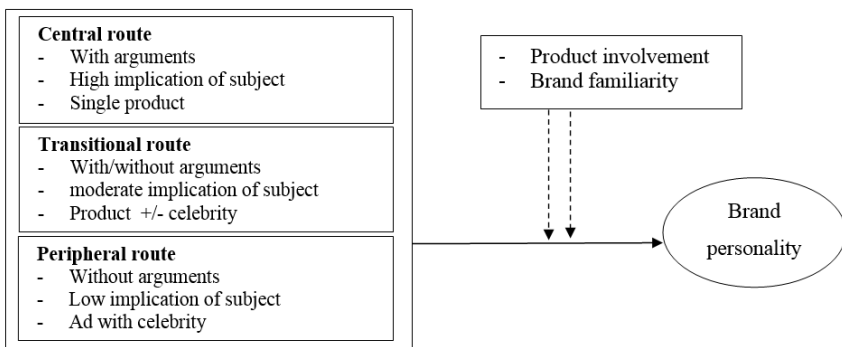
-The number of connections and activated ideas in the consumer's mind that will be naturally bigger (Grunert, 1996).

So in low involvement, consumers may be influenced by elements related to the peripheral route (Petty and Cacioppo , 1986). Therefore, we formulate the following hypotheses:

H3 : product involvement moderates the relationship between persuasive advertising and brand personality.

The relationships between the variables are summarised in Figure 1 which depicts our conceptual model.

Figure 1: The conceptual model



2 Research Methodology

2.1 Products, brands, stimuli and measurement scales selection

2.1.1 Product Selection: It was necessary to retain the products categories on the basis of the differential level of involvement, because we have introduced product involvement

as a moderator variable in our conceptual model. Our final choice was set on soft drinks and cars.

2.1.2 Selection of brands: Since brand familiarity is one of our moderator variable, we need familiar and unfamiliar brands. Regarding the choice of familiar brands, we selected Peugeot for cars and Coca Cola for soft drinks on the basis of a spontaneous recognition test.

Concerning unfamiliar brands, Lorina soft drinks brand and Maybach cars have been selected. To ensure that our sample doesn't know the brands, we tested the level of familiarity of these brands with 40 people (20 men and 20 women) , the results confirm our assumptions. Lorina and Maybach are unknown in Algeria.

2.1.3 Selection of celebrities: Our experiment requires the use of celebrities with a strong reputation. So, on the basis of a recognition test (spontaneous and aided) the choice ends up with the actor KivanTutlang for cars and the singer Nancy Ajram for soft drinks.

2.1.4 Implementation of ads: We used print ads. Thus, for each brand used, two ads were created. They vary according to their informative (with or without arguments) and the presence versus the absence of celebrity. Apart a real ad (Coca Cola with celebrity), the other Ads were made in photoshop 7 (see Appendix 1).

2.1.5 Involvement toward the Ad: In our experiment we have adopted two scenarii based on the literature (Petty and Cacioppo, 1983; Johar, 1995 ;...) that deal with the involvement toward ads (high vs. low involvement)

2.1.6 The experimental design

We used a 2X2X2 factorial design which contains eight different experimental conditions in which subjects were randomly assigned to these conditions (see table 2).

Table 2: The experimental design

	familiar brands		unfamiliar brands	
	cars	Soft drinks	cars	Soft drinks
Ads: - with arguments - Single product - High implication of subjects	Peugeot 150	Coca Cola 150	Maybach 150	Lorina 150
Ads: - Without arguments - Celebrity - Low implication of subjects	Peugeot 150	Coca Cola 150	Maybach 150	Lorina 150

5- The sample

To construct our sample, we used quota sampling on the basis of two main criteria: age (17-69 years) and gender to ensure their representativeness of Tlemcen city.

Table 3: The sample

	17-19 ans	20-24 ans	25-29 ans	30-34 ans	35-39 ans	40-44 ans	45-49 ans	50-54 ans	55-59 ans	60-64 ans	65-69 ans	Total
Age												
Male	79	88	89	75	64	56	45	42	35	22	19	614
Female	77	84	82	70	62	55	44	40	32	22	19	586
Total	155	172	170	145	126	111	89	83	66	44	38	1200

6- Selection of scales

- Brand personality : BPI Aaker (1997) adapted to the Algerian context by Merabet et Benhabib (2012) (20 items) .
- Brand familiarity: single test item.
- Product involvement: Strazzieri scale (1994) (six items aggregated into three components).
- Involvement towards ads: single test item.

All these constructs are assessed on a five points Likert scale.

3 Analysis , Results and Discussion

3.1 Testing measurement models

Exploratory and confirmatory analyzes were performed on all scales except brand familiarity and involvement towards ads scales. ACP with promax rotation were conducted on the scale of brand personality. Furthermore, varimax rotation was applied to the product involvement scale. Two items are removed from product involvement scale (see Appendix 2).

- For all scales, the data are adequate to the factorization (all KMO are greater than 0.7 and Bartlett's test of sphericity is significant). The percentage of variance explained is over 70%. Communalities and factor scores of items are also higher than 0.5 .

-Cronbach's alpha and Rho Jöreskog are very satisfactory.

- Confirmatory factor analysis with a bootstrap procedure were conducted (see appendix 2). The analysis covered a good fit models.

3.2 Testing the hypothesis of the influence of the change of treatment of advertising

The first hypothesis is tested using analysis of variance MANOVA. The results support the role of persuasive advertising as an antecedent of brand personality. The effect is significant on all brand personality dimensions except competence dimension of Coca Cola and Peugeot (see Table 4) .

Table 4: The influence of the change of treatment of advertising on BP

Source		Coca Cola		Lorina		Peugeot		Maybach	
		F	Sig.	F	Sig.	F	Sig.	F	Sig.
Persuasive advertising	DYNAM	10,411	0,023	143,265	0,00	12,961	0,03	16,455	0,00
	SINCER	4,32	0,038	27,968	0,00	13,608	0,00	26,103	0,014
	COMPET	0,371	0,543	35,063	0,00	0,447	0,504	11,734	0,039
	SOPHI	3,645	0,047	7,634	0,047	4,054	0,043	6,943	0,009
	MASCU	16,61	0,00	118,717	0,00	6,398	0,048	21,867	0,00

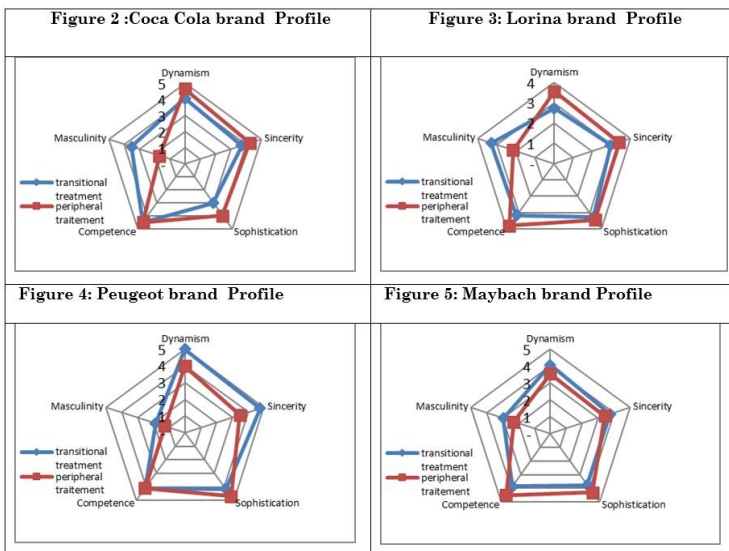
Also, the following figures show clearly the difference in the brand personality perception dimensions depending the treatment of persuasive advertising.

3.2.1 Coca Cola brand: Coca Cola is considered more masculine when the transitional route of persuasion is followed. Moreover, in the case of the peripheral route, Coca Cola is seen as more dynamic, sincere and sophisticated. Regarding the competence dimension we d'ont observe significant difference.

3.2.2 Lorina brand: Consumers have perceived Lorina as most dynamic, sincere, competent, sophisticated and less masculine when they followed the peripheral route.

3.2.3 Peugeot brand: Regarding Peugeot, we find that It is seen more dynamic, sincere, and masculine in the case of a central route. Furthermore, no significant difference was observed for the competence dimension.

3.2.4 Maybach brand: Maybach is considered more sophisticated and competent in a transitional treatment, the contrast means observed in other dimensions are higher when treatment is central .



These results indicate that if we want to convey brand personality traits we can influence the choice of advertising persuasion routes. For example our study show that our Algerian consumer perceive:

- Brands more sophisticated and less masculine when the product is presented with a celebrity in an ads.
- Brands cars are more dynamic and sincere with central processing and soft drink brands in the case of peripheral processing. It is therefore necessary to examine the moderating role of product involvement.
- No significant difference for the competence dimension regarding familiar brands. We will investigate the moderating role of brand familiarity.

3.4 The test of moderating variables

To explore the moderating role of brand familiarity and product involvement, first we recoded these variables into two separated groups. Analysis of variance (MANOVA) were performed:

3.4.1 Testing the hypothesis of the moderating impact of product involvement on the relationship between persuasive advertising and brand personality

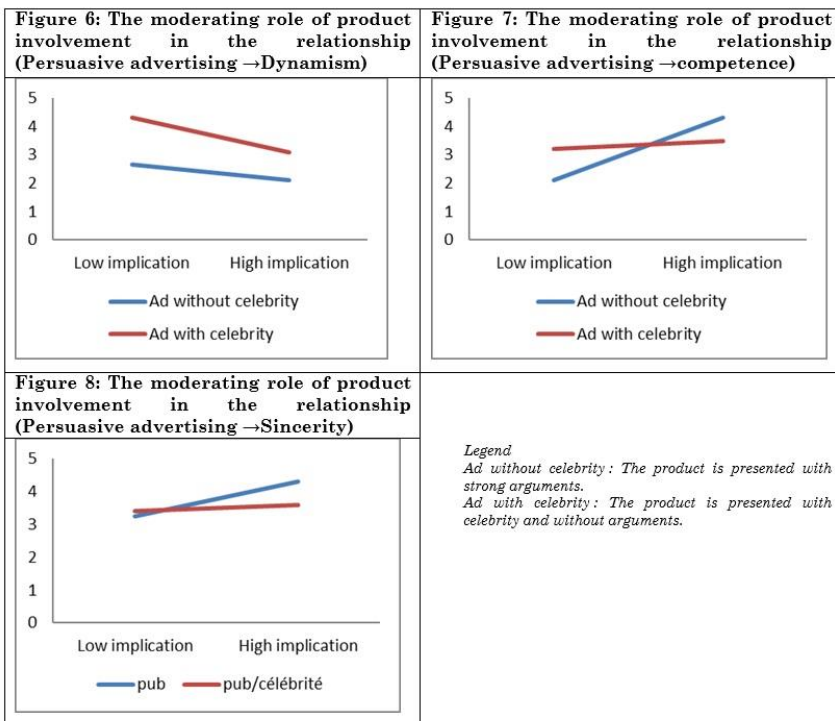
Table 5: Testing the hypothesis of the moderating effect of familiarity and involvement on the relationship between persuasive advertising with brand personality

	involvement * persuasive advertising		familiarity * persuasive advertising	
	F	Sig.	F	Sig.
MASCULINITY	0,436	0,509	15,664	0
DYNAMISM	6	0,014	9,911	0,002
SINCERITY	8,331	0,0249	6,658	0,01
COMPETENCE	8,757	0,003	3,636	0,042
SOPHISTICATION	1,072	0,301	0,099	0,753

According to Baron and Kenny (1986) results in the above table indicate that involvement moderates the relationship between

persuasive advertising to influence the following dimensions of brand personality:

- **Dynamism** ($F = 6.00$, $p = 0.014$): A brand is considered more dynamic when a low involvement product is presented with a celebrity in advertising (see fig.6).
- **Sincerity** ($F = 8.331$, $p = 0.024$): A brand is considered more sincere when a product is in the case of central route (see fig.7).
- **Competence** ($F = 8.757$, $p = 0.03$): A brand is considered more competent when a high involvement product is presented with a celebrity in advertising (see fig.8).



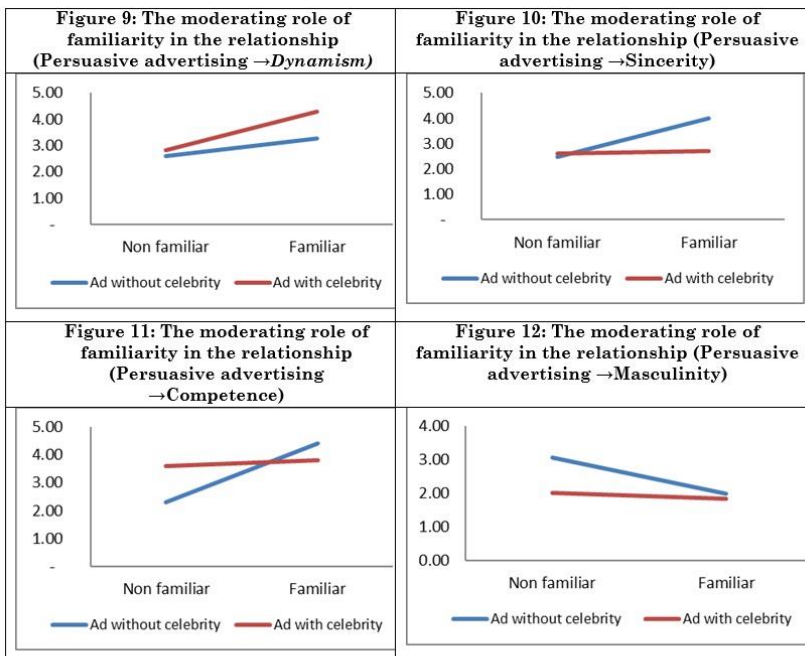
3.4.2 Testing the hypothesis of the moderating effect of familiarity on the relationship between persuasive advertising with brand personality

It appears across the table, that brand familiarity moderates the link between persuasive advertising → brand personality:

Dynamism ($F = 9.911, p = 0.02$): A brand is considered more dynamic when it's familiar and the product is presented with a celebrity in advertising (see fig.9).

- **Sincerity** ($F = 6.658, p = 0.02$) and **Competence** ($F = 3.636, p = 0.042$): A brand is considered more sincere and competent when it's familiar and the product is presented in advertising with high arguments. (See fig.10 and fig.11).

- **Masculinity** ($F = 15.664, p = .00$): A brand is considered more masculine when it is unfamiliar and the product is presented in a advertising with high arguments (see fig.12).



Legend

Ad without celebrity : The product is presented with strong arguments.

Ad with celebrity : The product is presented with celebrity and without arguments.

- ✓ Another remark about the moderating role of familiarity, persuasive advertising has a smaller influence on the perception of personality traits of familiar brands because consumers already have an idea about the brand and had attributed a personality conversely the perception of personality traits of unfamiliar brands based solely on advertising and content. Indeed all Fisher F are higher in the case of unfamiliar brands.

Table 6: Perception of personality traits according to brand familiarity

Brands/brand personality dimensions	Dynamism	Sincerity	Competence	Masculinity
Coca Cola	10,41	4,32	Infirmée	16,61
Lorina	143,27	27,97	35,06	118,71
Peugeot	12,96	13,61	Infirmée	6,39
Maybach	16,46	26,10	11,73	21,86

Conclusion

From the beginning of this research, we asked a number of questions about the direct role that could have routes of persuasion followed by consumers on their perceptions of brand personality traits. Results have shown that the change in the treatment of persuasive advertising influences the perception of brand personality. That means that if you want to convey brand personality traits, we can influence the choice of advertising persuasion routes. In this paper, we have not sought to demonstrate the predominance of either one of these routes. Instead we tried to show the impact of each route by considering that all routes have their importance in the attribution of brand personality traits.

This study also found that brand familiarity moderates the relationship between persuasive advertising and brand personality dimensions (such as Dynamism, Sincerity, Competence and Masculinity). In addition, product involvement

interacts with persuasive advertising to influence dynamism, sincerity and competence dimensions of brand personality. So the Integration of brand familiarity and product involvement as moderating variables is essential to understanding the role of persuasion routes on brand personality.

Research implication

1 - Theoretical Contributions: We have found that marketing research in brand personality antecedent is limited, particularly with regard to the role of routes of persuasion in advertising. The scarcity of contributions in this area thus reaffirms the theoretical interest of the present research.

Also, based on the models of persuasion in particular the ELM model, we identified a third route of persuasion, called "transitional route" that lies between the central and peripheral routes, and is characterized by a moderate involvement. In addition, we analyzed the concomitant influence of these three routes of persuasion which increases our knowledge of this issue.

2- Managerial implication: These results are of interest to managers because brand personality is a differentiation tool (Aaker, 1996; Aaker, 1997; Batra, Lehmann and Singh, 1993; Biel, 1993; Keller, 1993; Plummer 1984; Triplett, 1994). The control of the feature sources of brand personality could guide managers in the reconception of their strategy of brand positioning.

This research provides marketers a tool to measure brand personality adapted to cultural Algerian context that can help them to measure the personality of their brands and their evolution over time and compare it with other brands.

Future researches

It seems interesting to:

- ✓ Explore the role of other antecedents of brand personality and test the Algerian context to fill the gaps in this area.
- ✓ Consider other moderating variables such as gender and age.
- ✓ Validate the results in other product categories as the product involvement is a moderating variable.

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Appendix 1 : Ads



Appendix 2 : Exploratory and confirmatory analyses resultants

	Item	Communalities	Factor loading	% explain variance	Cronbach Alpha	KMO	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Eigen values
IMPCPR	IMPCPR1	0,66	0,81	72,41	0,73	0,71	p=0,0000	2,17
	IMPCPR2	0,73	0,85					
	IMPCPR3	0,57	0,76					
	IMPCPR5	0,69	0,70					
DYNAM	DYNAM1	0,69	0,62	5,53	0,81	0,92	p=0,0000	1,25
	DYNAM2	0,66	0,66					
	DYNAM3	0,71	0,75					
SINCER	SINCER1	0,77	0,80	7,27	0,89	0,92	p=0,0000	2,45
	SINCER2	0,82	0,81					
	SINCER3	0,80	0,77					
	SINCER4	0,69	0,75					
SOPHI	SOPHI1	0,75	0,74	9,99	0,90	0,92	p=0,0000	2,99
	SOPHI2	0,68	0,73					
	SOPHI3	0,70	0,59					
	SOPHI4	0,53	0,47					
	SOPHI5	0,60	0,65					
COMPET	COMPET1	0,61	0,71	46,15	0,89	0,92	p=0,0000	9,23
	COMPET2	0,66	0,78					
	COMPET3	0,59	0,71					
	COMPET4	0,54	0,72					
	COMPET5	0,67	0,79					
	COMPET6	0,64	0,76					
MASCU	MASCU1	0,90	0,92	4,93	0,95	0,92	p=0,0000	1,1