A comparative study among brand-conscious and non-brand conscious consumers: Brand image as a function of self-concept, vanity and self-esteem

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Abstract

The aim of this quantitative study is to examine the level of Self- concept, Vanity and Self- esteem of consumers who are brand- conscious and those who are not. The sample included 300 participants taken from different institutes of Peshawar. Convenient sampling technique is used to collect data. Four instruments are used to conduct this research. Brand Consciousness is measured by Brand consciousness scale. To assess the other variables Self- Concept Scale, Vanity Scale and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale are used. To make the comparison between Brand- conscious and non - brand conscious consumers, t- test is applied by the researcher. The conclusions show that both groups differed significantly in levels of Self-concept, Self-esteem and Vanity. Self- Concept and Self-esteem is low in brand-conscious consumers while vanity is high.

Keywords: Brand-conscious; Non-brand conscious; Brand image; Self-Concept; Vanity; Self-Esteem

The world is becoming more glamorous; people are attempting to look graceful and elegant. The luxurious brands and goods are becoming our Centre of attention. We are more prone towards brand tags and branded stuff. We want to be appreciated and admired by others for our famous and expensive products. The brand- name and luxury goods are preferred in order to have a luxurious life (Ahmed, Arshad, Sabir, & Ashraf, 2013).

Literature define Brand as any unique product which is valued and admired by the users (Caldwell & Freire, 2004) while Brand image is the emotional

attachment and association with a brand (Arora & Stoner, 2009). The positive attitude towards a brand is linked with the positive association towards it. This image is formed due to the following factors i.e., qualities and features of the product, perceptions about the product and our experiences. (Kotler & Keller, 2011).

The people who show great affection towards brands are considered as brand-conscious. They are more likely to be aware of and giving preference to branded products. Their orientation towards brands make them to purchase it even when it is expensive.

Self- concept is actually is our beliefs, attitudes and views. It is the understanding about our nature. The purchaser's opinions, views and his consumption behavior are interrelated. Eslami and Sayar (as cited in Amini, Ghodsi & Rafiee, 2016). Our self- concept, self- image and ideal image play a role in making our perception about brands and make us to purchase those products which can represent us. We can say that somehow we try to improve our self- concepts by our consumption behavior. (Dunning, 2007)

The other variable selected for the present research is Vanity; self- love. It is a personality trait. It makes an individual to grab the attention of others and to desire for admiration. According to Weilong (as cited in Ye, Liu, & Shi, 2015) vanity is split into two parts; appearance vanity and achievement vanity. Schiff man and Kanuk (2004) proposed that vanity and personal image are closely linked. The use and purchasing of luxurious and branded products increases with the increase of vanity.

How much we value ourselves and the way we feel about ourselves is called Self- esteem; another independent variable of this study. People with low self-esteem are in need of approval from others. They pursue brands to make them feel superior (Dommer, Swaminathan, & Ahluwalia, 2013). Aaker (1999) gave the opinion that self- worth is raised through famous brands.

Our new generation is very much attracted towards glamour and charm. Majority love to purchase branded accessories. (Laforet, 2010). They value and appreciate brands more which make their decision easier while shopping. They spend more on branded stuff. (Chernatony, McDonald & Wallace, 2011).

Nowadays the social media is also playing a role in increasing the trend of brands. The brand owners easily communicate with their followers through

blogging sites, groups and pages. The self-conscious people think that branded outfit will make them look more stylish and impressive. The brand tags give them satisfaction. (Jahandad, 2016). Many other factors are also involved in making people conscious towards brands. Apart from external sources there are internal sources involved. It can't be denied that social approval and social media play a role but our own self- concepts, self- centeredness and self- esteem can be the reasons.

Rationale of the study

This research is aimed to explore the self- esteem, self- concept and vanity of brand- sensitive consumers. It provides us with knowledge that why certain people are more conscious towards brand tags and others are not. This research helps in understanding the motives and personalities of both groups. It helps in knowing that how the level of self-esteem and vanity contributes in making us more brand- conscious along with other factors.

It make us to know that how much it is important to be connected with our actual selves as the gap between ideal and actual-self lead to distortion in our self- concept. Furthermore, it helps in knowing that keeping the self- esteem and vanity level in control protect us from inferiority and superiority complexes. Attachment towards anything at extreme level leads to frustration. This research helps in discovering the ways to manage self- destructive behaviors. It makes us realize that self- assessment is important rather than relying on the perceptions of others. To own branded and luxurious goods is not the only means to achieve contentment. This research helps in facilitating further discoveries in the region of consumer behavior and brand awareness.

Objectives

Following are the objectives of this research:

1. To find out how self- concept and brand image are interrelated.
2. To discover the link between vanity and consumption of branded items.
3. To investigate how level of self-esteem is influenced by luxurious consumption.

Hypotheses

1. Brand-conscious people will score low on Self- concept scale in comparison to Non- brand conscious people.
2. Brand- conscious people will score high on Vanity scale.

3. Brand- conscious people will have low Self- esteem in comparison to Non-brand conscious.

Method
A comparative design is used to make a comparison between Brand-conscious and Non- brand conscious consumers.

Participants
The sample included participants from different institutes of Peshawar i.e., University of Peshawar, Agriculture University, Iqra University and Sarhad University. In total, 300 participants took part in research. The age range was 20-60.

Inclusion criteria
Both the categories of consumers took part in research.

Exclusion criteria
The professional models were not a part of this research. The researcher also excluded participants below 13 years and uneducated people.

Instruments
Following instruments were used:
1. Demographic Information Sheet
2. Brand consciousness Scale
3. Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale
4. Self-Concept Questionnaire (SCQ)
5. Vanity Scale

Demographic information sheet
The demographic information sheet included the following information i.e., their names, professions and qualifications.

Brand consciousness scale
To measure Brand- consciousness, Brand consciousness Scale was used which was developed by many researchers; Kapferer and Laurent (1992); Lachance, Beaudoin, and Robitaille (2003); Nelson and McLeod (2005). It's a reliable scale with reliability 0.84. The questions assess the level of preference that consumers give to the brand name when buying items.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

Self-esteem was measured by Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale which is developed by Rosenberg (1965). The affirmative and destructive emotional state is being measured by this scale. Its reliability range from 0.77 to 0.88 .The highest possible score on this scale is 30 while 5 items are reverse scored.

Self-Concept Questionnaire (SCQ)

Self- concept was assessed through eight- point scale called Self-Concept Questionnaire (SCQ) having 0.89 reliability. This 30 item scale was established by Robson (1989). The 16 items included are reverse scored. Following factors are assessed by this scale; worthiness, contentment, attractiveness, competence, significance, autonomous self-regard and approval by others, self-efficacy and the value of existence.

Vanity Scale

Vanity was assessed through a seven- point scale known as Vanity Scale with reliability ranging from 0.84 to 0.91. It was developed by Netemeyer, Burton and Lichtenstein (1995). Four traits are measured by this scale: e Physical-concern, Physical-view, Achievement- concern and Achievement- view.

Procedure

To achieve the target, the sample was selected from institutions in Peshawar i.e., from University of Peshawar, Agriculture University, Iqra University and Sarhad University. The researcher discussed the purpose of the research with the participants after introducing herself. They were not compelled to participate. They were instructed about filling the questionnaires. They were also assured about the confidentiality. In the end they were appreciated for being cooperative.

Results

The research was conducted on 300 participants. Table 1 presents the no. of participants from different institutes of Peshawar. Both males and females were included.

Table 1

Cross tabulation of Frequencies of Demographic Variables (Gender and Universities) of male and female Brand Conscious and Non-Brand Conscious Consumers (N=300)

			Universities		
Gender	N	University of Peshawar	Agriculture University	Iqra University	Sarhad University
Male	150	35	40	40	35
Female	150	35	40	40	35

Comparison between brand-conscious and non-brand conscious consumers through self-concept questionnaire

The first research question of this study is answered by applying t- test to determine the differences between two groups. Table 2 presents the difference on Self- Concept Questionnaire (SCQ).

Table 2

Mean, standard deviation and t-values showing differences between brand-conscious and non- brand conscious consumers on Self- Concept Questionnaire (SCQ)

Scale	BrC		NBrC				95%	CI	
	(n=150)		(n=150)						
	M	SD	M	SD	T	P	LL	UL	Cohen's d
SCQ	105.36	12.29	111.7	12.57	4.448	.632	3.57	9.24	0.51

Note. SCQ= Self-Concept Questionnaire; CI= Class Interval; LL= Lower Limit; UL= Upper Limit

Results of Table 2 shows a Significant difference between means of Brand-conscious and Non- brand conscious consumers on Self- concept scale.

Comparison between brand-conscious and non-brand conscious consumers on Vanity Scale

The second research question of this research is answered by applying t- test to find out the difference. Table 3 illustrates the significant difference between Brand- conscious and Non- brand conscious consumers.

Table 3

Mean, standard deviation and t-values showing differences between brand-conscious and non-brand conscious consumers on Vanity Scale (VS)

Scale	BrC		NBrC				95%	CI	
	(n=150)		(n=150)						
	M	SD	M	SD	T	P	LL	UL	*Cohen's d*
VS	106.66	15.85	89.12	16.56	9.368	.062	13.85	21.22	1.08

Note. VS= Vanity Scale; CI= Class Interval; LL= Lower Limit; UL= Upper Limit

Table 4 results indicate a significant difference between brand- conscious and Non-brand conscious consumers on Vanity scale.

Comparison between Brand-conscious and non-brand conscious consumers on Self- esteem scale

Table 4

Mean, standard deviation and t-values showing differences between brand-conscious and non- brand conscious consumers on Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES)

Scale	BrC		NBrC				95%	CI	
	(n=150)		(n=150)						
	M	SD	M	SD	T	P	LL	UL	Cohen's d
RSES	15.14	2.74	18.62	3.44	9.684	.621	2.77	4.19	1.11

Note. RSES= Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale; CI= Class Interval; LL= Lower Limit; UL= Upper Limit

Table 4 results shows that statistically there is significant difference between Brand- conscious and Non- brand conscious groups on Self- esteem scale.

Discussion

The findings showed that all the hypotheses have been approved through the analysis of SPSS and from past researches as well. The hypotheses were: Brand-conscious have low self- concept as compared to non- brand conscious consumers and will score high on vanity scale. Furthermore, Brand- conscious have low level of self- esteem as compared to non- brand conscious consumers.

The brands consumption is somehow a tool to express self. The people with low Self- concept are very much conscious about branded possessions as they try to communicate their self through it. This fact is approved by previous researches as well.

The first hypothesis was approved by Meng (2007) also through his research conducted on female consumers that our self- concept and body- esteem does

play an important role in making our perceptions towards branded clothing. Our self- concept influences our involvement with renowned clothes. Lisjak, Lee, and Gardner (2012) provided evidence that we most often identify ourselves with our favourite brands. When our favorite brand is threatened , our low self-concept make us to defend it more as it is taken by us as a threat to self.

The second hypothesis of this research is aligned with the research by White (2015) who also examined the influence of vanity on purchasing behavior. By showing the ads of branded sunglasses their product evaluation was done which showed that vanity had a role in evaluation. Fitzmaurice and Comegys (2006) also addressed that vain people are more conscious towards brands and towards social approval.

Exploring the role of self- esteem and self-confidence in purchasing, Aghdaie and Khatami (2014) conducted survey research method. They established that self- esteem and self-assurance play a substantial role in making assumptions about brands which is also evidenced by the final hypothesis of the present research.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, we should maintain a balance in our personalities. The more we are involved in materialistic possessions and concerned about social approval, the more we are pushing ourselves to sufferings. We should know and understand our true selves. To make our self-concept high, we should know and accept our weaknesses rather than depending on ideal- self. To be contended with our own self is the key to happiness and success. Furthermore, importance should be given to moral values and relations rather than brands. Luxurious and lavish lifestyle leads to temporary satisfaction but adopting a life style according to teachings of Islam lead to eternal happiness and success.

Limitations of the study

The research is limited to only three variables but there are several other variables which need to be explored. The data collection was restricted to only Peshawar city. The sample size doesn't represent the population accurately as it is small.

Suggestions

The data should be gathered from other regions of Pakistan also to make precise conclusions. Many other variables can be researched in association with brand-consciousness i.e., our culture, peer pressure, social approval, social media etc.

The research should include the effect of qualification, gender and age on brand-consciousness for further analysis. Furthermore, the gender differences should also be studied.   .

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