The Effect of Ethical Attributes on Brand Personality and Consumer-Brand Relationships

Émilie Jean-Ruel

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ABSTRACT

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This research examines the effect of ethical attributes on brand personality and consumer-brand relationships – two rich marketing concepts, developed by Aaker (1997) and Fournier (1998), that have been investigated surprisingly very little to date. Specifically, it is hypothesized that: (1) ethical attributes can increase the sincerity and competence dimensions of brand personality (Aaker 1997); and (2) these personality dimensions can in turn favor the formation of strong and meaningful consumer-brand relationships such as committed partnerships, best friendships, and compartmentalized friendships (Fournier 1998). An experiment involving pairs of "ethical" and "mainstream" brands (e.g., The Body Shop and L'Oréal) was conducted to test these hypotheses. Results show that although both the sincerity and competence dimensions of brand personality can be increased by ethical attributes, only the competence dimension plays a significant role in shaping strong consumer-brand relationships. The results also suggest that the relationship between the competence dimension of brand personality and consumer-brand relationship strength is mediated by socio-emotional rewards. This research contributes to our understanding of the ability of marketers to manage specific dimensions of brand personality in order to elicit favorable consumer responses. Moreover, it allows marketing researchers and practitioners to better appreciate the phenomenon of ethical consumption, which is of increasing importance to today's firms.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Introduction

Relatively recently, the marketing literature has acknowledged that brands can develop specific personality traits (Aaker 1997) and become active relationship partners (Fournier 1998). Research suggests that brand personality can evolve over time and contribute to establish strong consumer relationship bonds, which can involve responses that go far beyond consumer loyalty or commitment (Aaker, Fournier, and Brasel 2004; Fournier 1998). The concepts of brand personality and consumer-brand relationships appear to be very promising, but much more research is needed to understand them and the relationship between them. In fact, a few studies have examined one of the two phenomena – e.g., the effect of advertising on brand personality dimensions (Ang and Lim 2006), the formation of brand relationships among specific consumer segments (Ji 2002; Kates 2000), the norms that govern different types of consumer-brand relationships (Aggarwal 2004), and the role of emotions (Pawle and Cooper 2006) and brand experiences (Chang and Chieng 2006) in the creation of consumer-brand relationships. However, the explicit effect of brand personality dimensions on consumer-brand relationships has only been investigated once (Aaker, Fournier, and Brasel 2004), despite the fact that relationship partners' personality perceptions have been identified as an important antecedent of consumer-brand relationships (Aaker, Fournier, and Brasel 2004; Fournier 1998). Furthermore, Keller and Lehmann (2006) recently suggested that future priorities in branding research include exploring how brand personality dimensions and consumer-brand relationships can be created and modified, and whether particular personality dimensions and customer-brand relationship types are more valuable (and profitable) than others. The objective of this research is to address some of these

questions by studying the relationship between brand personality and consumer-brand

relationships. Specifically, the research examines whether marketers can strengthen

certain brand personality dimensions through the use of ethical attributes, and whether

these personality dimensions can in turn affect consumer-brand relationship strength.

Theoretical Framework

Brand Personality

Aaker (1997) proposes a conceptual framework that aims to clarify the construct of

brand personality, which she defines as the set of human characteristics associated with

brands. She shows that one method of measuring brand personality is a 42-item scale

which has shown to be reliable, valid, and generalizable in North American culture.

Aaker (1997) suggests that a high congruity between the personality traits of a consumer

and those of a brand can increase the consumer's preference for that brand, but she shows

that brand personality is not structured exactly the same way as a human personality. In

fact, three brand personality dimensions are similar to some of the "Big Five" human

personality dimensions (Norman 1963): sincerity (which includes the facets of

wholesomeness and cheerfulness) can relate to agreeableness; excitement (which

includes the facets of spirit and daring) can relate to extroversion; and competence

(which includes the facet of reliability) can relate to conscientiousness. The two other

brand personality dimensions – sophistication and ruggedness – rather "tap a dimension

that individuals desire but do not necessarily have" (Aaker 1997, p. 353). Aaker (1997)

suggests that her brand personality scale can be used for further study on the antecedents,

consequences, and processing of brand personality. In particular, she suggests that further

research should explore the effect of distinct dimensions of brand personality on different

marketing variables (such as consumer preference and usage, emotions, and brand loyalty), and the effect of various marketing tactics (such as advertising and packaging) on brand personality.

Consumer-Brand Relationships

Fournier (1998) proposes a conceptual framework on consumer-brand relationships, suggesting that consumers develop different types of relationships with brands according to their concerns and existential life themes. Drawing on the psychology and marketing literatures, she shows that relationship theory can be applied to the consumer behavior field. Specifically, she argues that brands can be active relationship partners since they are commonly humanized, animated, and anthropomorphized by advertisers and consumers. Also, she explains that like interpersonal relationships, consumer-brand relationships can provide meanings to consumers since "it is within [the] level of ordinary experiences that the meanings most central to life are contained" (Fournier 1998, p. 366). For example, she suggests that consumers can use brands to express their autonomy, to construct their identity, or to feel good about themselves. Using interpersonal relationship analogies, Fournier (1998) defines fifteen consumer-brand relationship forms: arranged marriages, casual friendships, marriages of convenience, committed partnerships, best friendships, compartmentalized friendships, kinships, avoidance-driven relationships, childhood friendships, courtships, dependencies, flings, enmities, secret affairs, and enslavements. Each type involves different benefits, maintenance requirements, and development trajectories. Fournier (1998) also proposes a six-faceted brand relationship quality construct that includes love/passion, self-connection, interdependence, commitment, intimacy, and brand partner quality. The

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consumer-brand relationship theory implies a more refined conception of brand personality as it contains the notion that brand personality evolves over time according to the reciprocal exchanges occurring between the brand (through marketers' actions) and the consumer. Fournier (1998) urges researchers to further explore this phenomenon, stating that it is of "critical importance [...] to the advancement of marketing theory" (p. 365). In particular, she suggests that the adoption of a relationship-oriented view of consumer behaviors could offer new insights into several marketing domains, including brand loyalty, consumer attachment, consumer trust, and brand management.

Brand Personality and Consumer-Brand Relationships

Building on the theoretical frameworks on brand personality (Aaker 1997) and consumer-brand relationships (Fournier 1998), and on the premise that relationships are influenced by the personalities of the partners involved (Robins, Caspi, and Moffitt 2000), Aaker, Fournier, and Brasel (2004) examine the effect of two brand personality dimensions on the evolution of consumer-brand relationships. They show that relationships with sincere brands strengthen over time (similarly to close friendships) since the traits of family-orientation, wholesomeness, and friendliness that characterize sincere personalities are positively related to relationship strength and growth. In contrast, they show that relationships with exciting brands do not last (similarly to flings) since the traits of youthfulness, spirit, and independence that characterize exciting personalities are attractive and attention-getting on one hand, but negatively related to relationship strength on the other hand. The authors also demonstrate that transgressions are damaging for relationships with sincere brands, but positive for relationships with exciting brands. In sum, Aaker, Fournier, and Brasel's (2004) findings suggest that

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distinct brand personality dimensions have different effects on consumer-brand relationships. These effects prove to be both direct and indirect: personality dimensions (directly) influence the behaviors displayed in relationships and (indirectly) lead to partner-quality inferences. The authors call for further research to "ascertain the degree to which [the] different relationships are indeed nurtured by distinct brand personalities" and to identify "the contract terms that govern each relationship type including [...] relationship goals, behavioral norms, and rules for satisfaction assessment" (Aaker, Fournier, and Brasel 2004, p. 14).

Ethical Attributes and Brand Personality

Fournier (1998) suggests that all marketing mix initiatives can be viewed as a set of brand behaviors that contribute to shape brand personality; she even proposes that brands can think or feel through the daily activities of marketers. In fact, brand personality is a component of brand image (Plummer 1985), which consists of brand associations that contain the meaning of the brand for consumers (Keller 1993). Keller (1993) suggests that brand personality attributes can be inferred from user and usage imagery attributes (i.e., associations of a typical brand user or usage situation). He states that these non-product-related attributes tend to provide symbolic benefits, which fulfill needs for social approval, self-expression, and self-esteem. Keller (1993) notes that brand associations can be created by marketers (or other sources of influence) on the basis of direct experiences with the brand, information about the brand, or inferences from existing brand associations. This suggests that marketers can modify brand personality dimensions in various ways. For example, the use of ethical attributes (which can be defined as "attributes that reflect a person's conscience," Ehrich and Irwin 2005, p. 267)

could have an impact on consumers' experiences with the brand (e.g., organic ingredients may have a different taste; recycled paper may have a different look) and on the information that is communicated about the brand (e.g., product packages and advertisements may carry fair trade labels). These associations could in turn lead to inferences regarding brand personality (e.g., consumers may infer a high degree of wholesomeness or honesty from an organic ingredient or a fair trade label). The effect of ethical attributes on brand personality dimensions have never been investigated, but Hoeffler and Keller (2002) suggest that "corporate societal marketing could bolster the sincerity dimension of a brand personality such that consumers would perceive the people behind the brand as caring and genuine" (p. 79).

Hypotheses

This research examines the effect of ethical attributes on brand personality dimensions and the formation of consumer-brand relationships. More specifically, the focus is on the sincerity and competence dimensions of brand personality (Aaker 1997) and relationship strength.

First, it is hypothesized that ethical attributes can increase the sincerity and competence dimensions of a brand personality. For example, traits of honesty, sentimentality, and friendliness (which are associated with the sincerity dimension) may be evoked by brands that promote fair trade, that do not use child labor or animal testing, or that are environmentally friendly. Furthermore, traits of down-to-earthness, family/small-town orientation, realness, and wholesomeness (which are associated with the sincerity dimension), and traits of reliability, hard work, security, intelligence, and confidence (which are associated with the competence dimension) may be evoked by

brands that use local products, or that avoid the use of herbicides, pesticides, non-natural

ingredients, or genetically modified ingredients.

H_1: Ethical attributes increase the sincerity and competence dimensions of brand

personality, but not other dimensions of brand personality.

Second, it is hypothesized that the sincerity and competence dimensions of brand

personality favor the formation of strong consumer-brand relationships that are

characterized by stability, durability, and meaningfulness. In fact, Aaker, Fournier, and

Brasel (2004) demonstrate that relationships with sincere brands are likely to strengthen

over time, and Fournier (1998) mentions that "all strong brand relationships [included in

her study] were rooted in beliefs about superior product performance" (p. 365). Fournier

(1998) also explains that meaningful relationships develop on the basis of "perceived

goal compatibility" and "perceived ego significance" of brands (p. 366). Considering the

particular benefits offered by ethical attributes, it is suggested here that consumers are

likely to develop strong relationships, such as committed partnerships, best friendships,

and compartmentalized friendships, with ethical brands. For example, the sincere

dimension of ethical brands may help consumers fulfill a self-esteem function (e.g., prove

to themselves or others that they are socially and environmentally conscientious), an ego-

defensive function (e.g., avoid being tagged as materialistic or self-centered), a self-

definition function (e.g., aspire to become more responsible and altruist), or a self-

accomplishment function (e.g., seek to respect their values and principles, and contribute

to social and environmental causes). In addition, the competence dimension of ethical

brands may help consumers fulfill a self-esteem function (e.g., prove to themselves or

others that they use the finest and tastiest products) or a reassuring function (e.g., seek to

use the healthiest, gentlest, and safest products). Such benefits could be experienced through the interactions consumers have with the brands in their everyday life. In fact, the simple usage of brands over time can enable consumers to appropriate their symbolic properties (Belk 1988, McCracken 1986). Eventually, the benefits experienced by consumers are likely to lead to positive feelings that are associated with strong consumer-brand relationships: affection, self-connection (i.e., the feeling that the brand expresses a significant aspect of self), interdependence, commitment, intimacy, and perception of brand partner quality (i.e., the feeling that the brand is respectful, caring, dependable, reliable, trustful, and accountable) (Fournier 1998). These consumer feelings not only result in brand preference and brand loyalty, but also in biased perceptions of brands, resistance to competitive attacks, devaluation of alternatives, and tolerance and forgiveness of brand transgressions (Fournier 1998). For these reasons, strong consumer-brand relationships are highly desirable for marketers. In fact, "weaker" consumer-brand relationships – such as casual friendships, courtships, and flings – can have some value too, but they entail consumer responses that are either less intense or less durable. For example, Fournier (1998) suggests that flings involve strong consumer preference in the short-run, but consumer abandon in the medium- or long-run.

Fournier (1998) defines a committed partnership as a "long-term, voluntarily imposed, socially supported union high in love, intimacy, trust, and a commitment to stay together despite adverse circumstances" (p. 362). Like Jean who religiously uses Pastene tomatoes and Bertolli olive oil brands for realizing herself as a cook – which is "a major source of happiness, pride, and satisfaction in [her] life" (Fournier 1998, p. 349), certain consumers may use ethical brands in order to realize themselves as "good" persons.

Similarly to Jean, they might thus form committed partnerships with sincere and competent brands that do not "[hide] behind falsity or pretension" (Fournier 1998, p. 351). This prediction is at least supported by the interpersonal relationships literature, which suggests that the sincerity and competence dimensions of personality are particularly relevant for developing committed partnerships among individuals. In particular, traits of warmth and traditionalism are related to strong marital relationships (Robins, Caspi, and Moffitt 2000), and traits of trustworthiness, honesty, sensitivity, friendliness, reliability, maturity, and openness are related to intimate and loyal relationships (Fletcher, Simpson, Thomas, and Giles 1999).

Moreover, Fournier (1998) defines a best friendship as a "voluntary union based on reciprocity principle, [...] characterized by revelation of true self, honesty, and intimacy" which often involves "congruity in partner images and personal interests" (p. 362). Like Karen who drinks Coke Classic to make a statement that she can afford calories, some consumers may display ethical brands to show that they support certain causes. Such friendships are not disinterested: they allow Karen to be perceived as a non-Diet Coke consumer, and they might allow ethical consumers to be perceived as non-materialistic persons, or non-fashion victims. Thereby, best friendships enable consumers to maintain enmity relationships with other brands. Enmities involve negative affect and desire to avoid pain, and they are "purposive strategies for asserting a [...] sense of identity and independence" (Fournier 1998, p. 360). For example, Karen forms an enmity with Diet Coke, while ethical consumers may form enmities with brands that are associated with child labor or pollution. These "nonethical" brands can be thought to have the potential to

favor the formation of enmities since research indicates that they can cause strong consumer emotions such as negative affect, anger, and stress (Ehrich and Irwin 2005).

Finally, Fournier (1998) defines a compartmentalized friendship as a "highly specialized, situationally confined, enduring friendship characterized by lower intimacy than other friendship forms but higher socio-emotional rewards and interdependence" (p. 362). Like Vicki who uses Opium, Intimate Musk, and Giorgio perfumes in different situations because she believes "they all say different things about [her]" (Fournier 1998, p. 357), some consumers may use ethical brands in specific circumstances (e.g., special occasions, meetings with particular friends, or gift-giving). In fact, compartmentalized friendships help consumers express the multiple dimensions of their potential and realized selves (Fournier 1998). In other words, they enable consumers to define and regulate their public image. Interpersonal relationships research suggests that this impression management function is commonly served by friendships (Aron, Aron, Tudor, and Nelson 1991; Schlenker and Britt 1999).

Given the richness and multiple facets of the consumer-brand relationship theory, it seems reasonable to envisage that ethical brands have the power to facilitate the formation of strong relationships with consumers. Interestingly, Fournier's findings (1998) suggest that all kinds of consumers can develop strong relationships with brands. For example, Karen has very strong relationships with certain brands, even if she claims that "there are indeed more important things than consumer products occupying her thoughts" (p. 353) and that "the big brands are all alike" (p. 354). Perhaps those consumers who express reticence toward branding may be particularly sensitive to brand

differentiation strategies that focus on ethical attributes, thanks to their positive effect on the sincerity and competence dimensions of brand personality.

H_2: The sincerity and competence dimensions of brand personality result in stronger consumer-brand relationships than do other dimensions of brand personality.

H_3: The sincerity and competence dimensions of brand personality are more likely to be associated with strong consumer-brand relationships than with weak consumer-brand relationships.

H_4: The sincerity and competence dimensions of brand personality mediate the relationship between ethical attributes and consumer-brand relationship strength.

H_5: Socio-emotional rewards mediate the relationship between the sincerity and competence dimensions of brand personality and consumer-brand relationship strength.

Method

An on-line experiment was conducted among 249 undergraduate students (59% female, mean age = 22). Participants answered a series of questions regarding an "ethical" or "mainstream" brand selected in a pretest.

Measures

Brand personality dimensions were measured with Aaker's (1997) 42-item, seven-point scale (Cronbach's α for each dimension: sincerity = .93, excitement = .94, competence = .92, sophistication = .92, and ruggedness = .89). Consumer-brand relationship strength was measured with four seven-point scales developed by Aaker,

Fournier, and Brasel (2004) based on the interpersonal relationships and marketing literatures: a six-item measure of commitment, to which two items were added (Cronbach's α = .91), a five-item measure of intimacy (Cronbach's α = .85), a five-item measure of self-connection (Cronbach's α = .92), and a six-item measure of partner quality (Cronbach's α = .93). Two measures were also added to measure the remaining facets of the consumer-brand relationship strength construct: a three-item measure of brand affect developed by Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001), to which two items were added (Cronbach's α = .95), and a six-item measure of interdependence that was created (Cronbach's α = .91). Based on these six measures, a consumer-brand relationship strength index was constructed (Cronbach's α = .93; factor loadings ranged between .81 and .92; Nunnally and Bernstein 1994). Socio-emotional rewards were measured with a four-item scale that was created based on Fournier's (1998) definitions of committed partnerships, best friendships, and compartmentalized friendships (Cronbach's α = .94). Ethical attribute perceptions were measured with a seven-point scale including the following items: concern for environment protection, concern for employees' working condition, non-use of sweatshops, use of natural ingredients or materials, concern for animal welfare, and home-made production (e.g., "I strongly disagree/strongly agree that this brand is concerned with environment protection"; Cronbach's α = .91). Other measures included measures of brand familiarity, brand usage, price and quality perceptions, attitude toward ethical issues and ethical consumption (e.g., "I would feel not at all sad/very sad if I found out that I bought an item made in a sweatshop" – adapted from Ehrich and Irwin 2005), and demographics (age, sex). Measures involving ethics were assessed at the end to minimize demand effects and social desirability bias. The

items used to measure brand personality dimensions, consumer-brand relationship strength, ethical attribute perceptions, and attitude toward ethical issues are presented in Appendix A. The pretest and main questionnaires are presented in Appendix B and Appendix C.

Pretest: Choice of Stimuli

Two pairs of ethical and mainstream brands were identified for inclusion in the main experiment: The Body Shop and L'Oréal, and American Apparel and Gap. In a pretest, 162 undergraduate participants (54% female, mean age = 22) rated these brands regarding familiarity, price, quality, and ethical attributes, on seven-point scales. All brands were well-known ($M_{familiarity\ The\ Body\ Shop}$ = 4.62, $M_{familiarity\ L'Oréal}$ = 5.91, $M_{familiarity\ American\ Apparel}$ = 4.36, $M_{familiarity\ Gap}$ = 6.19). The Body Shop and L'Oréal were perceived to be somewhat different in terms of price ($M_{The\ Body\ Shop}$ = 4.44, $M_{L'Oréal}$ = 4.18, t_{161} = -1.91, p > .048, r = .22), but similar in terms of quality ($M_{The\ Body\ Shop}$ = 5.10, $M_{L'Oréal}$ = 5.36, t_{161} = 1.98, p > .05, r = .06). American Apparel and Gap were perceived to be similar in terms of price ($M_{American\ Apparel}$ = 4.75, M_{Gap} = 4.77, t_{161} = -.17, p > .86, r = .28). With regard to the quality of these brands, perceptions differed slightly ($M_{American\ Apparel}$ = 4.28, M_{Gap} = 4.75, t_{161} = -3.51, p < .001, r = .21), but the difference is not significant when the analysis excludes participants who were unfamiliar with the brands (i.e., reported a level of familiarity of 1; n = 119, $M_{American\ Apparel}$ = 4.44, M_{Gap} = 4.69, t_{118} = -1.72, p > .08, r = .30). As expected, the ethical brands were more strongly associated with ethical attributes than the mainstream brands. Compared to L'Oréal, The Body Shop was perceived more favorably in terms of environment protection ($M_{The\ Body\ Shop}$ = 4.76, $M_{L'Oréal}$ = 3.80, t_{161} = 6.61, p < .001, r = .12), employees' working conditions ($M_{The\ Body\ Shop}$ = 4.49, $M_{L'Oréal}$ =

4.01, $t_{161} = 3.63, p < .001, r = .10$), use of sweatshops ($M_{The\ Body\ Shop} = 4.45, M_{L'Oréal} =$

4.01, $t_{161} = 3.48, p < .001, r = .27$), use of natural ingredients ($M_{The\ Body\ Shop} = 5.17,$

$M_{L'Oréal} = 3.63, t_{161} = 9.29, p < .001, r = .02$), animal welfare ($M_{The\ Body\ Shop} = 4.48, M_{L'Oréal}$

$= 3.49, t_{161} = 6.69, p < .001, r = .30$), and home-made production ($M_{The\ Body\ Shop} = 3.88,$

$M_{L'Oréal} = 2.43, t_{161} = 9.72, p < .001, r = .27$). Compared to Gap, American Apparel was

perceived more favorably in terms of environment protection ($M_{American\ Apparel} = 4.23, M_{Gap}$

$= 3.81, t_{161} = 3.12, p < .003, r = .25$), employees' working conditions ($M_{American\ Apparel} =$

4.27, $M_{Gap} = 3.93, t_{161} = 2.09, p < .04, r = .11$), use of sweatshops ($M_{American\ Apparel} = 4.29,$

$M_{Gap} = 3.33, t_{161} = 5.51, p < .001, r = .10$), and animal welfare ($M_{American\ Apparel} = 3.79,$

$M_{Gap} = 3.41, t_{161} = 3.00, p < .004, r = .44$).

Design of Main Experiment

In a between-participants design, about half of the participants ($n = 118$) answered

questions regarding an ethical brand (i.e., The Body Shop or American Apparel), whereas

other participants ($n = 131$) answered questions regarding a mainstream brand (i.e.,

L'Oréal or Gap). Because consumers' relationships with brands are central to this

research, the assignment of participants to brands was designed to ensure that participants

were familiar with the brand they rated; brands were thus assigned on the basis of brand

familiarity. At the beginning of the experiment, participants rated their familiarity with a

brand (1 = not at all familiar, and 7 = very familiar), and those who reported a level of

familiarity less than 4 were referred to another brand. The order in which brands were

presented was randomized.

Analysis and Results[1]

Manipulation Checks

Ratings regarding price, quality, and ethical attributes were similar to those obtained

in the pretest. As expected, ethical and mainstream brands (i.e., The Body Shop and

American Apparel vs. L'Oréal and Gap) were perceived to be similar in terms of price

($M_{ethical\ brands} = 4.68$, $M_{mainstream\ brands} = 4.53$, $F_{1,247} = .59$, $p > .44$), and different in terms of

ethical attributes ($M_{ethical\ brands} = 4.31$, $M_{mainstream\ brands} = 3.69$, $F_{1,247} = 15.98$, $p < .001$).

However, the two types of brands were perceived to be different in terms of quality

($M_{ethical\ brands} = 4.19$, $M_{mainstream\ brands} = 4.76$, $F_{1,247} = 8.17$, $p < .005$). Subsequent analyses

control for this variable.

H_1: Effect of Ethical Attributes on Brand Personality

To test hypothesis 1, each brand personality dimension was regressed linearly on the

ethical attribute index. Brand familiarity, brand usage, attitude toward ethical issues, and

sex did not produce significant associations in the results when used as covariates, and

will thus not be discussed further. As predicted, perceptions regarding the sincerity and

competence dimensions of brand personality were positively and significantly affected by

ethical attribute perceptions ($\beta = .31$, $p < .001$, and $\beta = .14$, $p < .02$, respectively). Ethical

attribute perceptions also had a positive and significant effect on perceptions regarding

the excitement and sophistication dimensions of brand personality ($\beta = .29$, $p < .001$, and

$\beta = .18$, $p < .002$, respectively), however. The magnitude of standardized regression

coefficients suggests that the effect of ethical attributes on the sincerity dimension is

stronger than that on the other dimensions. In sum, hypothesis 1 was partially supported.

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[1] A summary of results is presented in Appendix D.

H₂: Effect of Brand Personality on Consumer-Brand Relationship Strength

To test hypothesis 2, the consumer-brand relationship strength index was regressed linearly on the five brand personality dimensions. Contrary to expectations, perceptions regarding consumer-brand relationship strength were not affected by perceptions regarding the sincerity dimension of brand personality. Yet, consumer-brand relationship strength was positively and significantly affected by all other dimensions of brand personality, especially by the competence dimension. Specifically, the standardized regression coefficient associated with the competence dimension was larger than that associated with the excitement, sophistication, and ruggedness dimensions ($\beta = .30, p < .001$ vs. $\beta = .18, p < .02$, $\beta = .18, p < .03$, and $\beta = .21, p < .001$, respectively). Furthermore, the competence dimension of brand personality was significantly and positively associated with the six consumer-brand relationship strength facets, while the excitement, sophistication, and ruggedness dimensions were significantly associated with only three or four facets. In sum, hypothesis 2 was partially supported.

H₃: Effect of Brand Personality on Strong vs. Weak Consumer-Brand Relationships

To test hypothesis 3, a new variable was created based on the commitment, self-connection, partner quality, and interdependence facets of the consumer-brand relationship strength construct (Cronbach's $\alpha = .91$; factor loadings ranged between .82 and .93; Nunnally and Bernstein 1994). According to Fournier (1998), these facets are strongly associated with strong consumer-brand relationships (such as committed partnerships, best friendships, and compartmentalized friendships) and weakly associated with weak consumer-brand relationships (such as flings[2]). This "relationship type" index

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[2] Fournier (1998) defines flings as "short-term, time-bounded engagements of high emotional reward, but

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was operationalized as a dichotomous variable (after a median split M_{high} = 3.93, M_{low} = 1.91, t_{247} = 22.07, p < .001). A logistic regression analysis revealed that the type of consumer-brand relationship (i.e., "weak" vs. "strong" relationships) was positively and significantly affected by the competence dimension of brand personality (B = .69, p < .001), but not by the other dimensions. Therefore, hypothesis 3 was partially supported.

H_4: Role of Brand Personality as a Mediator between Ethical Attributes and Consumer-Brand Relationship Strength

To test hypothesis 4, four sets of linear regressions (a-d below) were conducted; the ethical attribute index was the independent variable, the brand personality dimension index was the mediating variable, and the consumer-brand relationship strength index was the dependent variable (Baron and Kenny 1986). This mediation analysis was conducted three times: one with the competence dimension, one with the excitement dimension, and one with the sophistication dimension[3]. In the three cases, (a) the effect of ethical attributes on consumer-brand relationship strength was significant (p's <.001), (b) the effect of ethical attributes on the brand personality dimension was significant (p's <.02), and (c) the effect of the brand personality dimension on consumer-brand relationship strength was significant (p's <.001). In addition, (d) when the effect of the brand personality dimension was controlled for, the effect of ethical attributes on consumer-brand relationship strength was significantly attenuated (a Sobel [1982] test revealed that the indirect effect of ethical attributes on consumer-brand relationship

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devoid of commitment and reciprocity demand" (p. 362). For example, she explains that Vicki has flings with a number of shampoo brands that allow her to live new experiences and "[fool] around" (Fournier 1998, p. 358), but that do not entail any loyalty.

[3] The ruggedness and sincerity dimensions of brand personality were not relevant to the analysis: the ruggedness dimension was not significantly affected by ethical attributes, and consumer-brand relationship strength was not significantly affected by the sincerity dimension.

strength via the brand personality dimension was significantly different from zero; p's < .02). These results suggest that the competence, excitement, and sophistication dimensions of brand personality mediate the relationship between ethical attributes and consumer-brand relationship strength. Therefore, hypothesis 4 was partially supported.

H_5: Role of Socio-emotional Rewards as a Mediator between Brand Personality and Consumer-Brand Relationship Strength

To test hypothesis 5, four sets of linear regressions (a-d below) were conducted; the competence dimension was the independent variable, socio-emotional rewards were the mediating variable, and the consumer-brand relationship strength index was the dependent variable (Baron and Kenny 1986). This mediation analysis was not conducted with the excitement and sophistication dimensions of brand personality because they did not have a significant effect on socio-emotional rewards[3]. As predicted, (a) the effect of competence on consumer-brand relationship strength was significant (p <.001), (b) the effect of competence on socio-emotional rewards was significant (p <.001), and (c) the effect of socio-emotional rewards on consumer-brand relationship strength was significant (p <.001). In addition, (d) when the effect of socio-emotional rewards was controlled for, the effect of competence on consumer-brand relationship strength was significantly attenuated (a Sobel [1982] test revealed that the indirect effect of competence on consumer-brand relationship strength via socio-emotional rewards was significantly different from zero; p < .001). These results suggest that socio-emotional rewards mediate the relationship between the competence dimension of brand personality and consumer-brand relationship strength. Therefore, hypothesis 5 was partially supported.

Discussion

The results of this experiment provide evidence that ethical attribute perceptions can affect brand personality perceptions and consumer-brand relationship strength. Specifically, brands that were perceived to be more ethical were perceived to be more sincere, competent, exciting, and sophisticated than other brands (hypothesis 1). Perceptions regarding brands' sincerity were particularly sensitive to ethical attributes. In addition, the positive effects of ethical attributes on brand personality translated into positive effects on consumer-brand relationship strength. Except for the sincerity dimension, all the dimensions of brand personality that were increased by ethical attributes had a positive impact on consumer-brand relationship strength (hypothesis 2). The role of competence in shaping strong consumer-brand relationships proved to be particularly important: First, this dimension had a larger effect on consumer-brand relationship strength than did the other dimensions of brand personality. Second, it is the only dimension that was associated with the six facets of the relationship strength construct. Finally, it is the only dimension that influenced consumer-brand relationship type (i.e., "weak" vs. "strong" relationships; hypothesis 3). With regard to the mechanisms that relate ethical attributes and consumer-brand relationship strength, two findings are noteworthy. First, it was demonstrated that the relationship between these two variables is mediated by the competence, excitement, and sophistication dimensions of brand personality (hypothesis 4). Second, it was shown that socio-emotional rewards mediate the relationship between competence and consumer-brand relationship strength (hypothesis 5).

In summary, the five hypotheses were partially supported. Unexpected findings concern the sincerity, excitement, and sophistication dimensions of brand personality: The sincerity dimension did not affect consumer-brand relationship strength (hypotheses 2-5); the excitement and sophistication dimensions were increased by ethical attributes, and they affected consumer-brand relationship strength (hypotheses 1-4).

Conclusion and Implications

This research demonstrates that ethical attributes can have positive effects on brand personality, which can in turn favor the formation of strong and meaningful consumer-brand relationships such as committed partnerships, best friendships, and compartmentalized friendships (Fournier 1998). Thus, it contributes to our understanding of the ability of marketers to create or strengthen specific dimensions of brand personality, and to our understanding of the impact of distinct dimensions of brand personality on different consumer-brand relationship types. In addition, it allows marketing researchers and practitioners to better appreciate the increasingly important phenomenon of ethical consumption:

First, the findings suggest that marketers can modify brand personality dimensions by incorporating ethical attributes (such as concern for environment protection, concern for employees' working condition, non-use of sweatshops, use of natural ingredients or materials, concern for animal welfare, and home-made production) into their branding strategy. In fact, when consumers perceive that a brand is ethical, they tend to perceive it more favorably than other brands in terms of competence, excitement, sophistication, and, most importantly, sincerity. These results corroborate – and expand – Hoeffler and Keller's (2002) proposition regarding the effect of corporate societal marketing on the

sincerity dimension of brand personality. In addition, they are consistent with Yoon, Gürhan-Canli, and Schwarz's (2006) research, which suggests that corporate social responsibility activities are more effective when consumers perceive that the company's motives are sincere. One avenue for future research would be to examine whether particular ethical attributes can shape different dimensions of brand personality. For example, as discussed earlier, it could be suggested that animal protection or fair trade can influence the sincerity dimension of brand personality, while the use of natural ingredients or local products can influence the competence dimension. Similarly, it could be hypothesized that brands that are environmentally friendly are likely to be perceived as cool, trendy, young, and contemporary (which are traits associated with the excitement dimension), or even glamorous and upper class (which are traits associated with the sophistication dimension) since environmental causes are increasingly popular – especially among young people. It would also be interesting to investigate whether particular ethical attributes are more beneficial than others in terms of brand personality perceptions. For example, Yoon, Gürhan-Canli, and Schwarz (2006) suggest that corporate social responsibility activities are more likely to have positive impacts on sincerity perceptions when they are not related with the company's core business, and when consumers learn about them from a neutral source (rather than the company's advertisements). Thus, different ethical attributes may have different effects on brand personality, depending on the context.

Furthermore, the results suggest that brand personality can influence the formation of consumer-brand relationships. In particular, it seems that the competence dimension of brand personality is more likely to favor the formation of strong consumer-brand

relationships (such as committed partnerships, best friendships, and compartmentalized friendships) than that of weak consumer-brand relationships (such as flings). This finding is consistent with Fournier's (1998) discussion of the importance of product performance and brand reliability in the formation of strong consumer-brand relationships. Also, it provides additional insight into Aaker, Fournier, and Brasel's (2004) study on the effect of two dimensions of brand personality (i.e., sincerity and excitement) on consumer-brand relationships. Unlike that study, the present research does not provide any evidence that the sincerity dimension of brand personality is positively associated with strong consumer-brand relationships. Yet, it must be noted that Aaker, Fournier, and Brasel's (2004) analyses include two dimensions of brand personality, while that of the present study include all five dimensions of brand personality[4]. To date, very few studies have addressed the antecedents of consumer-brand relationships. Given that these relationships can lead to consumer responses that are very desirable for marketers, it would be important that future research explore other approaches to building consumer-brand relationships.

Finally, the findings have implications for marketers who manage brands with ethical attributes. The results show that the competence dimension of brand personality mediates the relationship between ethical attributes and consumer-brand relationships, while socio-emotional rewards mediate the relationship between competence and consumer-brand relationships. This suggests that marketers who design ethical branding strategies might benefit from putting emphasis on brand characteristics that are associated with competence (such as reliability, intelligence, or security), and benefits that are likely to

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[4] When the consumer-brand relationship strength index is regressed linearly on the sincerity and excitement dimension indexes rather than on the five brand personality dimension indexes, the relationship between consumer-brand relationship strength and the sincerity dimension is significant ($\beta = .22, p < .001$).

entail socio-emotional rewards (such as self-esteem, ego-defense, self-definition, or self-accomplishment). This recommendation echoes those made by researchers who examined the role of perceived corporate ability in consumer responses to corporate social responsibility initiatives. Corporate ability, which refers to the company's expertise in producing and delivering products or services (Brown and Dacin 1997), has been defined as a necessary precondition for designing a successful ethical branding strategy. In particular, Sen and Bhattacharya (2001) found that corporate social responsibility activities can have negative effects on consumer responses when consumers perceive that they are realized at the expense of corporate ability; and Berens, van Riel, and van Rekom (2007) found that corporate social responsibility initiatives cannot compensate for a poor corporate ability when consumers consider that corporate ability is relevant to them.

This research provides evidence that ethical branding strategies can lead to desirable outcomes in terms of consumer perceptions and attitudes toward brands. More research is needed to examine whether the results obtained hold across various brands, product categories, consumer segments, and, most importantly, time. In fact, since consumer-brand relationships evolve over time, it would be relevant to examine the effect of ethical attributes on consumer perceptions in a longitudinal study (similar to Aaker, Fournier, and Brasel 2004). It would also be useful to validate the scales that were created for the purpose of this research (such as the interdependency and socio-emotional reward scales). Hopefully, the findings of this research will encourage researchers to further investigate the phenomenon of ethical consumption. Eventually, this may convince marketers to

make a greater use of ethical attributes in order to better respond to today's consumer needs.

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APPENDIX A

Construct Measures, Measurement Items, and Scale Reliabilities[5]

Measure	Items	Cronbach's α
Brand personality dimensions	(1 = not at all descriptive of this brand, 7 = extremely descriptive of this brand)	
Sincerity	Down-to-earth Family-oriented Small-town Honest Sincere Real Wholesome Original Cheerful Sentimental Friendly	.93
Excitement	Daring Trendy Exciting Spirited Cool Young Imaginative Unique Up-to-date Independent Contemporary	.94
Competence	Reliable Hard working Secure Intelligent Technical Corporate Successful Leader Confident	.92
Sophistication	Upper class Glamorous Good looking Charming Feminine Smooth	.92
Ruggedness	Outdoorsy Masculine Western Tough Rugged	.89

[5] Items that were created for the purpose of this research are in italic.

Measure	Items	Cronbach's α
Consumer-brand relationship strength	(1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree)	.93
Commitment	I am very loyal to this brand.	.91
	I am willing to make small sacrifices in order to keep using this brand.	
	I would be willing to postpone my purchase if this brand was temporarily unavailable.	
	I would stick with this brand even if it let me down once or twice.	
	I am so happy with this brand that I no longer feel the need to watch out for other alternatives.	
	I have been using this brand for more than three years.	
	I am likely to be using this brand one year from now.	
	I am likely to be using this brand three year from now.	
Intimacy	I would feel comfortable sharing detailed personal information about myself with this brand.	.85
	This brand really understands my needs in this product category.	
	I would feel comfortable describing this brand to someone who was not familiar with it.	
	I am familiar with the range of products this brand offers.	
	I have become very knowledgeable about this brand.	
Self-connection	This brand connects with the part of me that really makes me tick.	.92
	This brand fits well with my current stage of life.	
	This brand says a lot about the kind of person I would like to be.	
	Using this brand lets me be a part of a shared community of like-minded consumers.	
	This brand makes a statement about what is important to me in life.	
Partner quality	I can always count on this brand to do what is best.	.93
	If this brand makes a mistake, it will try its best to make up for it.	
	I know I can hold this brand accountable for its actions.	
	This brand is reliable.	
	Given my image of this brand, letting me down would surprise me.	
	A brand failure would be inconsistent with my expectations.	
Brand affect	I feel good when I use this brand.	.95
	This brand makes me happy.	
	This brand gives me pleasure.	
	I would be disappointed if this brand was withdrawn from the market.	
	I would feel that something is missing if this brand was withdrawn from the market.	

Measure	Items	Cronbach's α
Interdependency	*Using this brand means something special to me.* *Using this brand makes me feel good about myself.* *I like this brand because it stands apart from other brands.* *I try to avoid using brands other than this one (in this product category).* *This brand is special to me, even if I do not always use it on a regular basis.* *I intend to keep using this brand for several years, at least occasionally.*	.91
Socio-emotional rewards	(1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) *Using this brand helps me express my values to others.* *Using this brand helps me express a facet of my personality to others.* *This brand connects with one part of me that I like to reveal in certain situations.* *This brand connects with one part of me that I like to reveal to certain people.*	.94
Ethical attributes perceptions	(1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) *This brand is concerned with environment protection.* *This brand is concerned with employees' working conditions.* *This brand avoids using sweatshops.* *This brand uses natural ingredients or materials.* *This brand is concerned with animal welfare.* *This brand offers home-made products.*	.91
Attitude toward ethical issues		.91
Sadness	(1 = not at all sad, 7 = very sad) *How would you feel if you found out that you bought an item...* *...made in a sweatshop?* *...tested on animals?* *...made from resources coming from endangered forests?* *...made by workers who suffer from age, sex or race discrimination?* *...made by unsustainable methods of production?* *...made with artificial ingredients, chemicals, or preservatives?*	
Angriness	(1 = not very angry, 7 = very angry) *How angry you get when you hear about companies...* *...employing sweatshops to make their products?* *...testing products on animals?* *...using resources coming from endangered forests?* *...practicing age, sex or race discrimination?* *...using unsustainable methods of production?* *...using artificial ingredients, chemicals, or preservatives?*	.92

APPENDIX B

Pretest Questionnaire[6]

Please consider the brand shown below and answer the following questions.

1. How familiar are you with this brand?

Not at all familiar						Very familiar
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

2. Have you used this brand before?

Yes ☐

No ☐

3. Have you purchased this brand before?

Yes ☐

No ☐

4. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.

This brand...

	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
...offers high quality products.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
...is expensive.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
...is concerned with environment protection.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
...is concerned with employees' working conditions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
...avoids using sweatshops.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
...uses natural ingredients or materials.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
...is concerned with animal welfare.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
...offers home-made products.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

---

[6] Items that were created for the purpose of this research are in italic.

5. Please list all thoughts that come to your mind when you think of this brand. Use one box per thought and use as many boxes as necessary.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

6. Please indicate your gender.

Male ☐

Female ☐

7. Please indicate your age.

☐

APPENDIX C

Main Experiment Questionnaire[7]

Please consider the brand shown below and answer the following questions.

L'ORÉAL®

1. How familiar are you with this brand?

Not at all familiar						Very familiar
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

2. Have you used this brand before?

Yes ☐

No ☐

3. Have you purchased this brand before?

Yes ☐

No ☐

4. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
I am very loyal to this brand.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am willing to make small sacrifices in order to keep using this brand.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I would be willing to postpone my purchase if this brand was temporarily unavailable.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I would stick with this brand even if it let me down once or twice.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am so happy with this brand that I no longer feel the need to watch out for other alternatives.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I have been using this brand for more than three years.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am likely to be using this brand one year from now.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am likely to be using this brand three years from now.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

---

[7] Items that were created for the purpose of this research are in italic.

5. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
I would feel comfortable sharing detailed personal information about myself with this brand.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This brand really understands my needs in this product category.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I would feel comfortable describing this brand to someone who was not familiar with it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am familiar with the range of products this brand offers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I have become very knowledgeable about this brand.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

6. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
This brand connects with the part of me that really makes me tick.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This brand fits well with my current stage of life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This brand says a lot about the kind of person I would like to be.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Using this brand lets me be a part of a shared community of like-minded consumers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This brand makes a statement about what is important to me in life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

7. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
I can always count on this brand to do what is best.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
If this brand makes a mistake, it will try its best to make up for it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I know I can hold this brand accountable for its actions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This brand is reliable.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Given my image of this brand, letting me down would surprise me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A brand failure would be inconsistent with my expectations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

8. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
Using this brand helps me express my values to others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Using this brand helps me express a facet of my personality to others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This brand connects with one part of me that I like to reveal in certain situations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This brand connects with one part of me that I like to reveal to certain people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

9. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
Using this brand means something special to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Using this brand makes me feel good about myself.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I like this brand because it stands apart from other brands.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I try to avoid using brands other than this one (in this product category).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This brand is special to me, even if I do not always use it on a regular basis.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I intend to keep using this brand for several years, at least occasionally.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

10. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
I feel good when I use this brand.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This brand makes me happy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This brand gives me pleasure.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I would be disappointed if this brand was withdrawn from the market.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I would feel that something is missing if this brand was withdrawn from the market.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

11. Please circle the number reflecting how descriptive each adjective is of the brand.

	Not at all descriptive						Extremely descriptive
Down-to-earth	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Family-oriented	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Small-town	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Honest	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Sincere	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Real	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Wholesome	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Original	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Cheerful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Sentimental	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Friendly	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

12. Please circle the number reflecting how descriptive each adjective is of the brand.

	Not at all descriptive						Extremely descriptive
Daring	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Trendy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Exciting	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Spirited	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Cool	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Young	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Imaginative	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Unique	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Up-to-date	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Independent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Contemporary	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

13. Please circle the number reflecting how descriptive each adjective is of the brand.

	Not at all descriptive						Extremely descriptive
Reliable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Hard working	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Secure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Intelligent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Technical	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Corporate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Successful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Leader	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Confident	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

14. Please circle the number reflecting how descriptive each adjective is of the brand.

	Not at all descriptive						Extremely descriptive
Upper class	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Glamorous	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Good looking	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Charming	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Feminine	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Smooth	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

15. Please circle the number reflecting how descriptive each adjective is of the brand.

	Not at all descriptive						Extremely descriptive
Outdoorsy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Masculine	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Western	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Tough	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Rugged	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

16. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.

This brand...

	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
...offers high quality products.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
...is expensive.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
...is concerned with environment protection.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
...is concerned with employees' working conditions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
...avoids using sweatshops.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
...uses natural ingredients or materials.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
...is concerned with animal welfare.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
...offers home-made products.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

17. Please indicate how sad you would feel if you found out that you bought an item...

	Not at all sad						Very sad
...made in a sweatshop.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
...tested on animals.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
...made from resources coming from endangered forests.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
...made by workers who suffer from age, sex or race discrimination.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
...made by unsustainable methods of production.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
...made with artificial ingredients, chemicals, or preservatives.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

18. Please indicate how angry you get when you hear about companies...

	Not very angry						Very angry
...employing sweatshops to make their products.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
...testing products on animals.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
...using resources coming from endangered forests.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
...practicing age, sex or race discrimination.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
...using unsustainable methods of production.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
...using artificial ingredients, chemicals, or preservatives.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

19. Please indicate your gender.

Male ☐

Female ☐

20. Please indicate your age.

☐

APPENDIX D

Summary of Results[8]

Table 1. Perceptions Regarding The Body Shop and L'Oréal's Ethical Attributes, Quality, and Expensiveness: Mean Comparisons (Pretest)

Dependent variable	Brand	M	SD	t_{161}	r
Environment protection	The Body Shop	4.76	1.52	6.61***	.12
	L'Oréal	3.80	1.25		
Employees' working conditions	The Body Shop	4.49	1.33	3.63***	.10
	L'Oréal	4.01	1.18		
Use of sweatshops	The Body Shop	4.45	1.46	3.48***	.27
	L'Oréal	4.01	1.22		
Use of natural ingredients	The Body Shop	5.17	1.47	9.29***	.02
	L'Oréal	3.63	1.53		
Animal welfare	The Body Shop	4.48	1.71	6.69***	.30
	L'Oréal	3.49	1.42		
Home-made production	The Body Shop	3.88	1.54	9.72***	.27
	L'Oréal	2.43	1.60		
Quality	The Body Shop	5.10	1.27	1.98	.06
	L'Oréal	5.36	1.24		
Expensiveness	The Body Shop	4.44	1.34	-1.91	.22
	L'Oréal	4.18	1.33		

Table 2. Perceptions Regarding American Apparel and Gap's Ethical Attributes, Quality, and Expensiveness: Mean Comparisons (Pretest)

Dependent variable	Brand	M	SD	t_{161}	r
Environment protection	American Apparel	4.23	1.44	3.12**	.25
	Gap	3.81	1.36		
Employees' working conditions	American Apparel	4.27	1.58	2.09*	.11
	Gap	3.93	1.57		
Use of sweatshops	American Apparel	4.29	1.74	5.51***	.10
	Gap	3.33	1.54		
Use of natural ingredients	American Apparel	3.69	1.68	1.75	.38
	Gap	3.44	1.44		
Animal welfare	American Apparel	3.79	1.53	3.00**	.44
	Gap	3.41	1.49		
Home-made production	American Apparel	2.94	1.54	1.55	.54
	Gap	2.76	1.63		
Quality (excluding participants who were completely unfamiliar with the brands)	American Apparel	4.28 (4.44)	1.45 (1.49)	-3.51*** (t_{118} = -1.72)	.21 (.30)
	Gap	4.75 (4.69)	1.28 (1.18)		
Expensiveness	American Apparel	4.75	1.67	-.17	.28
	Gap	4.77	1.41		

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[8] Analyses control for brand quality perceptions. Significance levels of mean differences or regression coefficients are indicated by asterisks: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 3. Perceptions Regarding Brands' Ethical Attributes, Quality, and Expensiveness: Mean Comparisons (Manipulation Check)

Dependent variable	Type of brand	M	SD	$F_{1,247}$
Ethical attributes	Ethical	4.31	1.31	15.98***
	Mainstream	3.69	1.13	
Expensiveness	Ethical	4.68	1.57	.59
	Mainstream	4.53	1.53	
Quality	Ethical	4.19	1.65	8.17**
	Mainstream	4.76	1.49	

Table 4. Regression of Brand Personality Dimensions on Ethical Attribute Index (H_1)

Brand personality dimension	β	t
Sincerity	.31	5.13***
Excitement	.29	4.78***
Competence	.14	2.41*
Sophistication	.18	3.17**
Ruggedness	.04	.52

Table 5. Regression of Consumer-Brand Relationship Strength on Brand Personality Dimensions (H_2)

Brand personality dimension	β	t
Sincerity	-.03	-.37
Excitement	.18	2.35*
Competence	.30	3.57***
Sophistication	.18	2.34*
Ruggedness	.21	3.68***

Table 6. Logistic Regression of Consumer-Brand Relationship Type on Brand Personality Dimensions (H_3)

Brand personality dimension	B	Wald
Sincerity	-.06	-.12
Excitement	.21	1.38
Competence	.69	11.65***
Sophistication	.21	1.62
Ruggedness	.20	2.58

Table 7. Role of Competence as a Mediator between Ethical Attributes and Consumer-Brand Relationship Strength (H_4)

Equation	Independent variable	Dependent variable	β	t
a	Ethical attributes	Relationship strength	.23	3.72***
b	Ethical attributes	Competence	.14	2.41*
c	Competence	Relationship strength	.60	11.91***
d	Ethical attributes	Relationship strength	.16	2.89**
	Competence	Relationship strength	.50	8.59***

Table 8. Role of Excitement as a Mediator between Ethical Attributes and Consumer-Brand Relationship Strength (H_4)

Equation	Independent variable	Dependent variable	β	t
a	Ethical attributes	Relationship strength	.23	3.72***
b	Ethical attributes	Excitement	.29	4.78***
c	Excitement	Relationship strength	.56	10.54***
d	Ethical attributes	Relationship strength	.10	1.74
	Excitement	Relationship strength	.43	7.59***

Table 9. Role of Sophistication as a Mediator between Ethical Attributes and Consumer-Brand Relationship Strength (H_4)

Equation	Independent variable	Dependent variable	β	t
a	Ethical attributes	Relationship strength	.23	3.72***
b	Ethical attributes	Sophistication	.18	3.17**
c	Sophistication	Relationship strength	.50	9.09***
d	Ethical attributes	Relationship strength	.16	2.78 **
	Sophistication	Relationship strength	.35	5.41***

Table 10. Role of Socio-Emotional Rewards as a Mediator between Competence and Consumer-Brand Relationship Strength (H_5)

Equation	Independent variable	Dependent variable	β	t
a	Competence	Relationship strength	.60	11.91***
b	Competence	Socio-emotional rewards	.48	8.56***
c	Socio-emotional rewards	Relationship strength	.77	19.05***
d	Competence	Relationship strength	.30	7.27***
	Socio-emotional rewards	Relationship strength	.63	14.92***