## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

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A Brand that captures your mind gains behavior
- Brand Strategist Scott Talgo

1.1 Research Background

Human beings behave in a strange manner. They humanise non-human things in a mysterious way. The idol worship and the avatar of God in the form of human being are some of the best examples which prove that this notion is true. People who treat their car, computer or dog as a friend or a member of family can be found easily in everyday life (Tae-Hwan Yoon, 2004). In the same vein consumers tend to humanise brands too.

King (1970) writes that “people choose their brands the same way they choose their friends; they simply like them as people” (as cited in Anuja Pandey, 2009). Consumers also appear to experience no problems assigning human characteristics to brands (Aaker, 1997 as cited in Sujata Khandai et al.) or building a relationship with brands (Fournier, 1998 as cited in Sujata Khandai et al.).

Like a car, a brand is not a vital entity (Tae-Hwan Yoon, 2004). In fact, it does not even have any objective existence (Tae-Hwan Yoon, 2004). It is merely a collection of perceptions held in the minds of the people (Tae-Hwan Yoon, 2004). At this juncture it is quite natural to raise couple of questions. First question is: How can these inanimate brand act, think and feel (Tae-Hwan Yoon, 2004) like human beings? Three strong evidences are there to prove this.

The first testimony is the quote of Brand Strategist Scott Talgo:

“A Brand that captures your mind gains behavior”

According to him when a brand occupies the mind of a consumer it gains behavior. This indirectly proves that consumers form some kind of perceptions about the brand in their mind. This notion is also supported by Fournier (as cited in Tae-
Hwan Yoon, 2004), according to him, brand behaves through all marketing activities and brand management decisions, and it takes an active and contributing role in its relationship with customers as a reciprocating partner.

The second proof comes in the form of Theory of Anthropomorphism. Guthrie (as cited in Sayyed Mohsen Allameh, et al., 2012) defined Anthropomorphism as "the transmission of human characteristics to non-human things and events". Boyer states (as cited in Hultman et al., 2012) that Anthropomorphism theory maintains that people tend to humanise non-human things. Fournier (1998) suggests (as cited in Tae-Hwan Yoon, 2004) that personalisation of brands is also a form of anthropomorphism.

The third proof is the Theory of Animism. According to theories of animism, brands can possess their own personality, too (Sayyed Mohsen Allameh et al., 2012). Theory of Animism believes that all natural and inanimate or even intangible things have spirit and can influence human events (Sayyed Mohsen Allameh, et al., 2012). In line with the anthropic principle, consumers tend to attribute personalities to brands (Hultman, et al., 2012).

The second question is: Why do human beings humanise non-human things? Plummer (as cited in Sayyed Mohsen Allameh, et al., 2012) has answered for this in his study that human beings need to personify objects in order to improve their interactions with the intangible world. They have a tendency to attribute positive traits to products through anthropomorphism in order to improve their feeling of comfort and familiarity, and to reduce feelings of risk during using them (Sayyed Mohsen Allameh et al., 2012).

Plummer, in his work, concludes (as cited in Sayyed Mohsen Allameh, et al., 2012) that "The brands" like humans, may possess distinct personality characteristics.
It is called as Brand Personality. Brand personality is one of the core dimensions of brand equity, which is related to how people tend to contribute a "pseudo" human personality to the brand itself, rather than to what the brand really does (Sayyed Mohsen Allameh et al., 2012).

The purpose of this dissertation is to deepen the understanding of customer perception of brand personality. The above discussion emphasises that human beings personify brands by affixing human characteristics to the brands. This understanding is concreted with the support from the theory of anthropomorphism and animism. The above mentioned evidences form the background and conceptual foundation of the current study.

1.2 Research Problem

According to Ritson (as cited in Adele Lombard, 2007) there is no such thing as a product or service, which exists by itself in space, independent of the consumer. For a product to exist, it must find a place in an individual consumer’s perception of the world of products around him or her (Adele Lombard, 2007). This perception is subjective, governed by the individual consumer’s values, beliefs, needs, experience and environment (Adele Lombard, 2007).

Schiffinan and Kanuk (as cited in Titima Vangvanitchyakorn, 2000) stated about consumer perception saying “as diverse individuals, we all tend to see the world in our own special ways. ‘Reality’ to an individual is merely that individual's perception of what is “out there” - of what has taken place (Titima Vangvanitchyakorn, 2000). Individuals act and react on the basis of their perceptions, not on the basis of objective reality (Titima Vangvanitchyakorn, 2000). Thus, to the marketer, consumers’ perceptions are much more important than their knowledge of objective reality (Titima Vangvanitchyakorn, 2000). For if one thinks about it, it's
not what actually is so, but what consumers think is so that affects their actions, their buying habits, their leisure habits, and so forth (Titima Vangvanitchyakorn, 2000). And because individuals make decisions and take actions based on what they perceive to be reality, it is important that marketers understand the whole notion of perception and its related concepts so they can more readily determine what factors influence consumer to buy (Titima Vangvanitchyakorn, 2000)“.

According to Keller (as cited in Adele Lombard, 2007) strongly held perceptions about brands established in the minds of the consumers can be difficult to influence or change. Although there is a wide body of literature concerning the creation and development of brands, literature on the relationship between customer perception and brand personality is lacking.

For marketers, brand personality can be used to influence consumer behaviour and ultimately influence sales and profitability (Abdul, Raja Mazhaatul Yasmin Suraya, 2012). As a consequence, many studies have focused on measuring consumers’ brand personality perceptions (Abdul, Raja Mazhaatul Yasmin Suraya, 2012). However, less research has been devoted to examining the factors that drive consumers’ perceptions of brand personality (Abdul, Raja Mazhaatul Yasmin Suraya, 2012). Yet it is vital that marketers understand what factors influence consumers’ perceptions of a brand personality if they are going to be able to influence their behavior (Abdul, Raja Mazhaatul Yasmin Suraya, 2012). Hence through this study an attempt is made to fill the gap by studying the factors or antecedents influencing consumer’s perceptions of brand personality. Furthermore, from the managerial perspective, the current research also extends brand personality research to another well-grown industry in India, the two-wheeler industry.
The Automotive Corridor (also known as Detroit of Asia), is a 60 km long corridor in Chennai, India. This corridor alone accounts for 33% of commercial vehicles, 21% of all passenger cars, and 35% of auto components which are produced in the country. This indicates Chennai is one of the best places in India to study about two-wheeler customers perception on brand personality. Also research concentrating on antecedents of brand personality in Chennai is very much limited. Hence to fill this gap Chennai is selected as study area. The above discussion stresses in many ways that this study is required to the advancement of the brand personality concept.

1.3 Research Aim

Given the background and problem statement of the study, the aim of this dissertation is threefold. First, the research attempts to develop a model to understand brand personality dimensions through the antecedents of brand personality and its effect on emotional and cognitive branding outcomes. Second, the research intends to empirically test the model. Finally, the final aim of the study is to record the contributions made through this study.

1.4 Research Scope

The concepts of brand personality and consumer perception are very broad and deep in nature. In order to answer the purpose accurately and due to limitations regarding time and resources, it has been necessary to perform certain delimitations.

The first delimitation concerns a need to narrow-down the study field brand personality. Hence, the study area of the study is limited only to five constructs. The five constructs are Hedonic Perception, Utilitarian Perception, Brand Personality
dimensions (sincerity and excitement), Cognitive Branding Outcomes and Emotional Branding Outcomes.

As the aim is to obtain a comprehensive study on consumer perception of brand personality, the time limitation constrained only to focus on one industry, the two-wheeler industry. The two-wheeler segment consists of three segments viz. scooters, motorcycles and mopeds. All the three segments were considered for the study. The two-wheeler segment in India includes some of the key brands like Hero, Honda, TVS, Bajaj, Yamaha, Mahindra, Suzuki etc. This segment is dominated only by four players and hence this study, it was limited only to Hero, Honda, TVS and Bajaj. The next delimitation is the study area. The study was conducted in Chennai City of Tamil Nadu State in India. This indicates that the results cannot be generalizable to other parts of the state or the country. Consequently, given the above, within the context of the Chennai’s two-wheeler sector, the data and conclusions of this research should apply. However, outside those boundaries the generalisability of the results should be treated judiciously.

1.5 Research Objectives

The objectives of the study are listed as follows:

1. To develop a conceptual framework to establish the relationship between the antecedents of brand personality and dimensions of brand personality and, in turn, its impact on the emotional and cognitive branding outcomes.

2. To assess empirically the framework concerning the relationships between the antecedents of brand personality, dimensions of brand personality and branding outcomes.

3. To find out the dimensions affecting the constructs hedonic perception and utilitarian perception
4. To determine the influence of antecedents of brand personality on brand personality dimensions

5. To ascertain the relationship between brand personality dimensions and branding outcomes

6. To extrapolate the results and suggest managerial implications to practitioners

1.6 Research Questions

A thorough review of the literature suggested that only a very few studies that investigated the antecedents that shape consumers’ brand personality perceptions outside India. In India, very limited research work has been done in brand personality arena. The review of literature asserts that only a very few studies have been done in India which examines the influence of antecedents of brand personality. Thus, the aim of this research is to develop a holistic and comprehensive model that studies these effects in the context of two-wheeler brands. Moreover, no prior study has discussed these effects in two-wheeler industry. The study is guided by the following research questions to accomplish the objectives developed for the study.

The research questions to be addressed are:

1. What are the antecedents that drive consumers’ perceptions of brand personality?

2. What are the dimensions of the antecedents of brand personality?

3. Do the antecedents have an impact on sincerity and excitement dimension of brand personality?

4. What is the outcome of brand personality dimensions?

5. Do the dimensions of brand personality have an impact on the outcomes?
1.7 Research Hypotheses

By achieving the above mentioned research objectives, it is expected that this study will advance current knowledge about building a strategy for firms using antecedents of brand personality to create or match up with their brand strategy and offer practical insights to managers in practice. Therefore, a set of questions are asked in this research as research hypotheses (refer Table 1.1) in order to find out the answer for the research.

Table 1.1

List of Research Hypotheses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis No.</th>
<th>Hypotheses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H₁</td>
<td>Hedonic perception has a significant effect on the brand personality dimension sincerity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H₂</td>
<td>Hedonic perception has a significant effect on the brand personality dimension excitement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H₃</td>
<td>Utilitarian perception has a significant effect on the brand personality dimension sincerity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H₄</td>
<td>Utilitarian perception has a significant effect on the brand personality dimension excitement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H₅</td>
<td>Sincerity as the dimension of brand personality has a significant effect on post purchase perception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H₆</td>
<td>Excitement as the dimension of brand personality has a significant effect on emotional branding outcomes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Developed for the study

1.8 Research Justification

Managing brands plays a pivotal role in the company’s marketing strategy. Brand building and management frequently represent an important percentage of a firm’s overall marketing expense (Domadenik, Prašnikar, Svejnar, 2001 as cited in Von Katharina S. Güse, 2011). In general, brand management can be defined as a systematic process directed at creating, maintaining and nurturing brands in order to build up positions of competitive advantage in the company’s target markets (Keller,
2008 as cited in Von Katharina S. Güse, 2011). Gaining these competitive advantages has become a crucial challenge – especially in times of financial crisis, strong price competition and highly fragmented markets (Shocker, Srivastava and Ruekert, 1994 as cited in Von Katharina S. Güse, 2011). As a consequence, marketing scholars and practitioners alike show strong interest in concepts and mechanisms that can potentially increase the value of a company’s brand portfolio (Von Katharina S. Güse, 2011).

In particular, the brand personality concept, as one dimension of brand image (e.g. Plummer, 1985), has received increasing attention among researchers (Aaker and Fournier, 1995; Aaker, 1997; Freling and Forbes, 2005; Ang and Lim, 2006 as cited in Von Katharina S. Güse, 2011). Faircloth (2005) argues that, compared to other dimensions such as brand awareness, brand personality is the most significant antecedent of brand equity (as cited in Von Katharina S. Güse, 2011). From a managerial vantage point, the brand personality concept represents a strategic tool allowing the establishment of strong brands (Aaker, 1996; Keller and Lehman, 2003; Lombardi, 2007 as cited in Von Katharina S. Güse, 2011). However, in the marketing literature, disagreement still exists regarding the conceptualization and measurement of brand personality (see for instance Azoulay and Kapferer, 2003; Austin, Siguaw and Mattila, 2003 as cited in Von Katharina S. Güse, 2011).

Understanding brand personality is of significance both to brand managers and to customers, since this knowledge helps brand managers design and implement more effective strategies that add value for consumers (Abdul, Raja Mazhaatul Yasmin Suraya, 2012). The development of brand personality has been well-documented (Aaker, 1997; Aaker, 1999; Sung and Tinkham, 2005; Supphellen and Gronhaug, 2003; Bosnjak et al., 2007; Hosany et al., 2006; Geuens et al., 2009 as cited in Abdul,
Similarly, the positive effect of brand personality on consumers’ attitudes, loyalty, and purchasing intentions has been previously examined (Kim et al., 2001; Aaker, 1999; Lee and Back, 2010; O’Cass and Lim, 2002; Ramaseshan and Tsao, 2007 as cited in Abdul, Raja Mazhaatul Yasmin Suraya, 2012). Thus, the next logical step in studying brand personality is to investigate specific factors that influence brand personality perceptions (Abdul, Raja Mazhaatul Yasmin Suraya, 2012).

The above discussion suggests that there is a real need to study the factors influencing antecedents of brand personality. In India, research on the antecedents of brand personality is lacking, specifically with respect to Chennai consumers. Most of the studies so far conducted in India, focused only on the application of brand personality scale. The following table consists of list of some of the studies conducted in India and it reveals that no study was conducted to study the antecedents of brand personality.
### Table 1.2

**List of Brand Personality Studies Conducted in India**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Anees Ahmad and K. S. Thyagaraj</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Applicability of Brand Personality Dimensions across Cultures and Product Categories: A Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Das J.K., Prakash O and Khattri V</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Brand Personality Mapping: A study on Colas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Vandana Gupta</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>A study on Consumer perception and Brand Personality traits for making Cosmetic purchase decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Anuja Pandey</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Understanding Consumer Perception of Brand Personality (Dove)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Aditya Shankar Mishra and Sudeepa Pradhan</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>The Brand Personality Scale: Validation In The Indian Context (Nokia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Anees Ahmad and K. S. Thyagaraj</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Understanding the Influence of Brand Personality on Consumer Behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Saptarshi Purkayastha</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Brand Personality: An Empirical Study of Four Brands in India (Samsung, 7 Up, Motorola and Raymond)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Kinjal Gandhi</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>A Study on Brand Personality of Coca-Cola and Pepsi A Comparative Analysis in the Indian Market</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Developed for the study

Most previous studies are concerned with establishing and refining the measurement scales and determining the effects of brand personality (Maehle et al., 2011 as cited in Abdul, Raja Mazhaatul Yasmin Suraya, 2012). Studying about the antecedents of brand personality is an important way for marketers to evaluate the effectiveness of their marketing strategies. The understanding gained about the antecedents of brand personality can be used to improve promotions, advertising, and communications for the organisations.
For customers, communicating brand personality is believed to enhance consumers’ affective decision making (Abdul, Raja Mazhaatul Yasmin Suraya, 2012). It taps into their emotional feelings, attitudes, and experiences to ease choice decisions from the overwhelming number of brands on offer in competitive markets (Abdul, Raja Mazhaatul Yasmin Suraya, 2012). By examining these issues this research makes a significant contribution to understand the factors that shape consumers’ perceptions of brand personality and that subsequently influence their behavioural outcomes (Abdul, Raja Mazhaatul Yasmin Suraya, 2012).

1.9 Research Methodology

This research employs a mixed-research design. In order to accomplish the first objective of the research, which is to develop a conceptual framework, this study employed exploratory research design. To describe the characteristics of the respondents, descriptive research design is adopted. Explanatory research design is used in order to explain the relationships between variables of the model. A quantitative study method is used to analyse and interpret the model developed for the study. A questionnaire is designed and prepared to test the model. In order to generate the measurement items, the research employs literature search method. Hence survey method is used for data collection.

Survey is a popular strategy in conducting a research, as it allows a large amount collection of data from a chosen sample (Saunders, et al., 2009). Additionally, the author also pointed out that survey is essential in the collection of quantitative data whereby the researcher can analyse the data quantitatively by using inferential statistics.

This study uses both primary and secondary data for data collection. Second-hand information is obtained through journals, books, magazines, internet sources and
various libraries to develop the conceptual model of the study and first-hand information is obtained through questionnaire to test the research model. Questionnaire is pilot tested among 50 respondents. Minor flaws are identified and rectified. The sample size is determined by using sample size calculator. According to the sample size calculator, the sample size for the study is determined as 450. The sampling method to collect the primary data is proportionate stratified random sampling method. Convenience Sampling Method is used to select samples from each stratum. After refining the research instrument, in total, from 514 respondents, first-hand information is collected out of 750 questionnaires issued. The data were collected from Chennai Metropolitan City between October and December of 2014. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is used to test the research model developed for the study and to test hypothesis developed for the study.

1.10 Research Structure

The organization of this dissertation is presented in this section. This Thesis consists of five chapters. Figure 1.1 shows the structure of this dissertation.
Chapter 1, Introduction, is the gateway of this study. It introduces the study. This chapter begins with research background. Then statement of the problem is stated. The objectives and the research questions along with hypotheses are presented. The methodology used to accomplish the objectives of the study is also briefed.

Chapter 2 is Perspectives of Brand Personality. It covers past research and studies and articles from relevant journals, books, newspapers, etc. It is a summary of what other people have written and published around the theme of this particular research. The literature review is of course critical. This chapter first briefly outlines
the meaning of brand. The various definitions of brand from literature are introduced along with its relationship with consumer perception. The next section deals with the concept of brand personality. Its background and antecedents are explored. A model is then developed and hypotheses are presented.

**Chapter 3** is dedicated to Research Methodology. This chapter explains how scientific methods are used to accomplish the objectives of study. It covers philosophical perspectives, research approach, research design, research settings, sampling technique, questionnaire design, plan for data analysis and Structural Equation Modeling methodology.

**Chapter 4** deals with the Data Analysis of the study. Detailed analysis is done and the results are explored in a systematic manner. Furthermore, this chapter outlines the key findings of the study.

**Chapter 5** reports the Conclusions of the study. This chapter synthesizes the overall findings of the study. Furthermore, the results are discussed against the research objectives and hypotheses. Then, a revised conceptual framework is presented, followed by the theoretical and managerial contribution of the study. The chapter concludes with the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research.

**1.11 Summary**

This chapter, Introduction, presents the overview of this study lucidly. This chapter begins with the underlying basis or background of the study. The statement of research problem, the research objectives and hypotheses clearly justifies this research. The Research methodology of the study is also briefed. This chapter concludes with the research structure of the thesis. The next chapter of the study is
‘Perspectives of Brand Personality’ in which an attempt is made to articulate a brand new conceptual model based on previous related literature.