EMOTIONALITY EFFECTS OF BRAND PERSONALITY MARKER ATTRIBUTES ON PURCHASE INTENTION

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Abstract. According to the *Five-Factor Model* (cf. Digman 1990; Goldberg 1993), the potentially infinite set of attributes describing human personality may be reduced to only five traits, the so-called *Big Five Factors*: i.e., Agreeableness, Openness to experience, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism/Emotional stability, Introversion/Extroversion. Recent research (e.g., Aaker 1997; Caprara, Barbaranelli and Guido 2001) has shown that this model may be successfully extended from social psychology to brand personality. This study goes a step forward by pointing out that *only* those *marker* attributes of brand personality – namely, those attributes that, compared to others, are more capable of eliciting in perceivers the characteristics of a specific *Big Five* factor – which are, *at the same time*, able to elicit emotions (i.e., *vivid* marker attributes) exert a significant influence on consumers' purchase intention. Implications for marketers and advertisers are discussed.

1. Introduction

In our modern affluent society, consumers tend to assign anthropomorphic characteristics to products and brands, both "reflecting" onto them some traits of their own personalities or by treating them as persons with a personality of their own. This has encouraged several researchers to introduce a construct of *brand personality*, defined as the set of human characteristics that are typically associated to the brand (Aaker 1997; Plummer 2000).

One of the most extensively used models in social psychology for studying this construct is the *Five-Factor Model,* henceforward the FFM (see Digman 1990; Goldberg 1993, for reviews). It is based upon the seminal hypothesis of the *Linguistic sedimentation* as elaborated by Cattell (1945), according to which the potentially infinite set of the personality descriptive attributes can be reduced to a limited number of attributes – so-called *markers* – which elicit more prominently than others one out of five relevant personality traits (i.e., the so-called *Big Five Factors*). These traits (also called factors, components, or dimensions) are: *Agreeableness,* that is, the orientation towards compassion and caring about others; *Conscientiousness*, the preference for goal-oriented activity, namely the degree of

organization; *Introversion/Extroversion*, the subjective aversion/predisposition towards social interaction and activity; *Openness to Experience*, the experientially oriented degree of tolerance for new ideas and new ways of doing things; and *Neuroticism/Emotional Stability*, the subjective inability/ability to respond to external stimuli whilst keeping emotions and impulses under control. Recently, some researchers (Aaker 1997; Caprara and Barbaranelli, 1996; Caprara, Barbaranelli and Guido 1998, 2001) have successfully extended the FFM to marketing settings in order to describe the image of *branded products*, thereby showing that the same marker attributes can be used to represent at best brand personality – although with some limitations due to the application of a model of human personality to a different field of investigation.

Although *marker* attributes have been shown to be effective in eliciting a specific brand personality trait in consumers' minds, they are not always able to influence consumers' purchase intention. A crucial role could be played by the degree of *vividness* of such attributes used in advertising communications, whose main component is represented by their level of *emotionality.* The construct of *vividness* is traditionally defined as the power of a stimulus to get the perceivers' attention and to arouse their imagination (Nisbett and Ross 1980). According to Guido (2001), *vividness* can be considered as a sub-dimension of *involvement* – that is the level of personal relevance of a stimulus (Zaichkowsky 1985) – that moderates the *salience* of such a stimulus, namely the degree by which a stimulus is perceived, in a specific context, as incongruent to the perceiver's own mental schemata, thus attracting his/her attention. According to Nisbett and Ross (1980), a stimulus is *vivid* to the extend that it is: (1) *emotionally interesting*, i.e., it arouses emotions, meant as intense and short-term affective reactions on the part of the receiver (cf. Bagozzi, Gopinath, and Nyer 1999); (2) *concrete and imagery provoking*, i.e., it refers to the amount of details enabling the activation or creation of images in the perceiver's mind (e.g., Sadoski *et al.* 1997); and (3) *proximate in a sensory, temporal or spatial way*, respectively indicating the degree by which senses are involved in the stimulus perception, the time lapse occurring since the very moment of perception, and the physical distance between the perceiver and the physical environment in which the stimulus occurred.

In many cases of advertising communication, marker attributes (i.e., those attributes which are able to elicit main brand personality traits in consumers' minds) are made of verbal stimuli, whose *vividness* degree mostly depends on their *emotionality* level, rather than on the other two vividness components (cf. Guido and Provenzano 2004). As a matter of fact, if compared to other words (e.g., nouns), attributes are abstract (rather than *concrete*) in their

nature, in that they serve to describe intangible characteristics of an object; equally, the other component of *sensorial, temporal and spatial proximity* depends upon the subjective perception of single respondents and tends to be null with big samples or, alternatively, to be reflected by the *emotionality* component, both in its positive or negative values. As a matter of fact, a proximate stimulus usually elicits positive or negative emotions in respect to two orders of factors (Nisbett and Ross 1980): *familiarity*, that is the degree of involvement of personal affections in the perceiving process; and its *hedonic relevance*, that is the extent to which a stimulus perception can involve the perceiver's own motivations, needs and desires.

The aim of the present study is to show that *only* those marker attributes of the Big Five factors of brand personality with higher levels of positive (or negative) emotionality are capable of influencing positively (or negatively) consumers' purchase intention. On the contrary, this predictive power is inhibited for those marker attributes that are neutral from an emotional point of view. To this end, in the next section of the article, two research objectives will be pursued consisting, respectively, in: (1) determining the emotionality levels of a list of bipolar marker attributes, by assessing their ability to elicit positive (or negative) emotions in perceivers; and (2) testing their influence on the consumers' purchase intention of some branded products, both directly and indirectly, through its cognitive determinants, as assessed according to Ajzen's (1991) *Theory of Planned Behavior* (TPB), a model extensively used in the field of social psychology for predicting human behaviors. Hence, the next sections shall be devoted to a description of the adopted methodology, the obtained results, and finally the theoretical and marketing implications of this research.

2. Research objectives

In the marketing literature, the role of emotions in predicting purchase behaviors as well as in investigating the consequent evaluation process has been considered crucial (e.g., Chaudhuri 2006). Besides considering events (for example, the actual occurring of the purchase expected consequences), as well as the consumer's own preferred actions (i.e., the purchase of a chosen product), emotions can also be generated by the product's characteristics (O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy 2003) and, thus, by attributes describing its image.

In order to verify whether and to what extent the marker attributes of brand personality are capable of eliciting emotions in consumers and, thus, to be of use in communication strategies with persuasive ends (e.g., advertising), two research objectives were set: (1)

Measuring the degree of emotionality of brand personality marker attributes identified by the FFM (cf. Caprara, Barbaranelli and Guido 2001); and (2) Verifying whether those marker attributes showing higher levels of (positive or negative) emotionality affect consumers' purchase intention and its determinants identified by Ajzen's (1991) TPB.

According to the TPB (Ajzen 1991), a behavioral intention (such as the *purchase intention*) – which is assumed to be the best predictor of the actual behavior (in this case, the purchase behavior) – depends upon three main determinants: *attitude*, i.e., the subjective (either positive or negative) predisposition toward a specific behavior (e.g., the purchase behavior); *subjective norm*, i.e., the perception of a social pressure, exerted on the perceiver, to perform (or not) such a behavior; and *perceived behavioral control*, i.e., the perception of how easy (or difficult) it is to perform such a behavior. According to this model, each determinant of the behavioral intention is based, in turn, on *beliefs*, which derive from the product of the subjective probability of some consequences related to the behavior (i.e., the expectancies) and the corresponding evaluations (i.e., the values) of such a behavior. In line with all "expectancy-value" models (cf. Eagly and Chaiken 1993, for a review), therefore, *attitude* results from the so-called *behavioral beliefs*, that is, the sum of products of the subjective probability that the behavior in question will assure specific advantages (or disadvantages) and the relative importance assigned by the perceiver to each of these consequences. *Subjective norm* results from the so-called *normative beliefs*, that is, the sum of the products of the subjective probability that the behavior will be approved (or disapproved) by the so-called relevant others (i.e., persons or groups of persons close to the consumer) and the corresponding subjective motivation to comply with them. Similarly, *perceived behavioral control* results from the so-called *control beliefs*, that is, the sum of products of the subjective probability of certain events that could facilitate (or hinder) the behavior and the corresponding evaluations of the importance of such events in influencing behavioral intention. In our study, each of these determinants of purchase intention could be influenced by the emotionality level of marker attributes related to a specific branded product personality.

3. Methodology

An experimental study was carried out on a sample of Italian university students (N = 557), by using, as experimental stimuli, four branded products extensively purchased by this

population of consumers and belonging to two different product categories (i.e., convenience and shopping goods).

Firstly, in order to identify the four branded products to be used as experimental stimuli in the main questionnaire, a focus group was carried out, consisting of 16 university students (50% M/F, average age 19-27), by means of which two categories of products were chosen among those rated as the most frequently purchased ones: *coffee*, as a convenience good, and *clothing*, as a shopping good. Then, two brands for each product category were chosen amongst well-known brands on the Italian market and the most frequently cited ones by participants in the focus group: Lavazza and Nescafè, as coffee brands; and Benetton and Intimissimi, as clothing brands.

Secondly, following the Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) procedure, a pilot study was carried out, by administering a open-ended questionnaire to a sample of 30 university students (50% M/F, average age 19-27), in order to identify *salient beliefs* – namely, the ones which were held by participants as determinants of the purchase intention – amongst those most frequently cited (see Guido 2001, for a critical review of this concept of salience).

Thirdly, to assess the degree of emotionality of 80 marker attributes of personality drawn from a list of 40 bipolar attributes widely tested in literature (e.g., Caprara and Barbaranelli 1996; Guido 2001), a close-ended questionnaire was administered to a sample of 91 university students (60.4% M and 39.6% F, average age 19-27). For each of 80 marker attributes, following the seminal study by Vikis-Freibergs (1976), emotionality was assessed by using a mono-item 7-point Likert scale ranged from –3 (corresponding to "Strongly negative emotionality") to +3 (corresponding to "Strongly positive emotionality"). In this case, marker attributes were submitted in Italian, the native language of sample participants. Nevertheless, this should not be considered as a limitation of the study for at least three reasons: (1) verbal stimuli tend to be perceived as relatively less emotional when presented in a non-native language (Puntoni 2006); (2) the marker attributes of personality have been tested across a number of languages with similar results as regards their capacity of eliciting the Big Five factors (cf. Guido and Provenzano 2004); and (3) the FFM has been successfully tested also across many languages, including Italian (cf. Caprara and Perugini 1994).

Finally, in line with results of the pilot study, a main questionnaire, developed in four different versions (one for each brand), was administered to a broad sample of 557 Italian university students. They consisted of: (1) 40 items, on a 7-point Likert scale, concerning behavioral, normative, and control beliefs, to assess, respectively, *attitude, subjective norm*, and *perceived behavioral control*; (2) two items to assess *purchase intention*, on a 7-point

Likert scale, measuring, respectively, the strength of the intention to buy a specific branded product and the subjective probability of effectively engaging in such a behavior over a specified period of time; (3) 40 bipolar marker attributes of brand personality, on a 7-point semantic differential scale, measuring the perceived image of each branded product; and, finally, (4) two questions about gender and age of respondents. The four main questionnaires were administered to as many sub-samples of subjects of the same population. In particular, the questionnaire on Lavazza coffee was administered to a sub-sample of 151 subjects (35% M and 65% F); the one on Nescafé coffee, to a sub-sample of 125 subjects (65% M and 35% F); the one on Benetton clothing, to a sub-sample of 152 subjects (45% M and 55% F); and finally, the questionnaire on Intimissimi clothing, to a sample of 129 subjects (39% M and 61% F). All the samples showed an average age in the range of 19-27 years-old.

4. Results

As for the first research objective, concerning the assessment of the degree of emotionality of each of the 80 marker attributes (derived from the opposite semantic poles of the original 40-item bipolar scale used by such studies as Caprara and Barbaranelli 1996; Guido 2001), it was carried out a *t*-test on the average score of the emotionality scale, in order to verify whether it significantly differs from the neutral value of zero. Thus, the median value was also computed, as an index of the response distribution (Table 1, *below*).

Table 1: *Emotionality Degree of the 80 Marker Attributes. Descriptive Statistics and Median Values*

Marker attribute	*M*	*SD*	*Me*	Marker attribute	*M*	*SD*	*Me*
1. Cheerful	2.6**	.6	3	41. Conformist	-.2	1.3	0
2. Sincere	2.5**	.7	3	42. Ancient	-.3*	1.3	0
3. Nice	2.5**	.7	3	43. Impulsive	-.3	1.6	0
4. Friendly	2.4**	.6	2	44. Conservative	-.5**	1.2	0
5. Funny	2.4**	.8	3	45. Untidy	-.7**	1.5	-1
6. Honest	2.4**	1.0	3	46. Old	-.7**	1.2	-1
7. Affectionate	2.3**	.8	2	47. Frivolous	-.8**	1.5	-1
8. Generous	2.2**	.8	2	48. Tense	-1.0**	1.1	-1
9. Reliable	2.2**	.8	2	49. Oblivious	-1.0**	1.3	-1
10. Energetic	2.0**	.8	2	50. Agitated	-1.0**	1.2	-1
11. Lively	2.0**	.9	2	51. Cool	-1.0**	1.5	-1
12. Sensible	2.0**	1.0	2	52. Weak	-1.0**	.9	-1
13. Fanciful	2.0**	1.0	2	53. Fragile	-1.1**	1.2	-1
14. Cordial	2.0**	1.0	2	54. Anxious	-1.1**	1.2	-1
15. Original	1.9**	.9	2	55. Unsafe	-1.2**	1.3	-1
16. Attentive	1.9**	1.0	2	56. Unimaginative	-1.2**	1.2	-1
17. Safe	1.8**	1.0	2	57. Undetermined	-1.2**	1.2	-1
18. Determined	1.8**	1.0	2	58. Uncompetitive	-1.3**	1.3	-2
19. Developed	1.8**	.9	2	59. Imprudent	-1.3**	1.3	-1
20. Patient	1.7**	.9	2	60. Coarse	-1.3**	1.2	-1
21. Refined	1.7**	1.2	2	61. Inconstant	-1.4**	1.2	-1
22. Careful	1.6**	1.0	2	62. Unaffectionate	-1.4**	1.1	-2
23. Innovative	1.6**	1.1	2	63. Traditional	-1.4**	1.2	-2
24. Competitive	1.6**	1.2	2	64. Tense	-1.4**	1.2	-2
25. New	1.6**	1.3	2	65. Shortsighted	-1.4**	1.3	-2
26. Stable	1.6**	.8	2	66. Unstable	-1.5**	1.1	-2
27. Relaxed	1.5**	1.1	2	67. Careless	-1.6**	1.3	-2
28. Prudent	1.5**	1.1	2	68. Dull	-1.6**	1.2	-2
29. Hot	1.5**	1.3	2	69. Sluggish	-1.7**	1.1	-2
30. Strong	1.5**	1.0	2	70. Insensible	-1.9**	1.3	-2
31. Quiet	1.4**	1.2	2	71. Distant	-2.0**	.9	-2
32. Tidy	1.4**	1.2	2	72. Selfish	-2.0**	1.1	-2
33. Modern	1.4**	1.0	2	73. Underdeveloped	-2.0**	1.1	-2
34. Constant	1.4**	1.0	2	74. Mean	-2.1**	1.4	-3
35. Farsighted	1.3**	1.0	1	75. Unreliable	-2.1**	.9	-2
36. Calm	1.3**	1.2	1	76. Coarse	-2.2**	1.1	-3
37. Solid	1.2**	1.2	1	77. Hostile	-2.2**	.9	-2
38. Serious	1.1**	1.2	1	78. False	-2.3**	1.1	-3
39. Controlled	1.0**	1.3	1	79. Sad	-2.4**	.7	-2
40. Unconventional	.1	1.5	0	80. Dishonest	-2.5**	1.0	-3

Note: $N = 91$. * = difference from the neutral value of zero significant at .05 level; ** = difference from the neutral value of zero significant at .01 level. Positive median values ($Me > 0$) denote positive emotionality; negative median values ($Me < 0$) denote negative emotionality; median values equal to 0 ($Me = 0$) denote lack of emotionality.

For those marker attributes whose *t* statistics reached a significance level, the related median value was taken into consideration: a median value higher (lower) than zero was considered as an indicator of positive (negative) emotionality, since it shows a higher (lower) concentration of responses on the positive (negative) side of the scale. Following this criterion, marker attributes that were found to be unemotional were: *unconventional* ($M = .1$, $p > .05$; $Me = 0$); *conventional* ($M = -.2$, $p > .05$, $Me = 0$); *ancient* ($M = -.3$, $p < .05$, $Me = 0$);

impulsive (M = -.3, p > .05, *Me* = 0); *conservative* (M = -.5, p < .01, *Me* = 0). All the other marker attributes showed a significant level of emotionality. In particular, among those attributes that are found to be mostly capable of eliciting positive emotions, there are: *cheerful* (M = 2.6, p < .01, *Me* = 3), *sincere* (M = 2.5, p < .01, *Me* = 3); *nice* (M = 2.5, p < .01, *Me* =3); *friendly* (M = 2.4, p < .01, *Me* = 2); *funny* (M = 2.4, p < .01, *Me*); and *honest* (M = 2.4, p < .01, *Me* = 3). Among those attributes mostly able to elicit negative emotions, there are: *dishonest* (M= -2.5, p < .01, *Me* = -3); *sad* (M = -2.4, p < .01, *Me* = -2); *false* (M= -2.3, p < .01, *Me* = -3); *hostile* (M = -2.2, p < .01, *Me* = -2); *coarse* (M= -2.2, p < .01, *Me* = -3); *unreliable* (M = -2.3, p < .01, *Me* = -2); and *mean* (M = -2.1, p < .01, *Me* = -3) (see Table 1, *above*, for detailed results).

As for the second research objective, concerning the impact of marker attributes on consumers' purchase intention and its determinants, Ajzen's (1991) model was applied. For each branded product, a multiple regression analysis was carried out, wherein *purchase intention* was treated as the dependent variable and *attitude*, *subjective norm*, and *perceived behavioral control* as independent ones. Results, summarized in Table 2 (*below*), show different fit indices of the model to real data and different weights for each independent variable across the four different branded products. In particular, for the two coffee brands, Lavazza and Nescafé, the tested model showed a low, although acceptable, fit level (R^2= .12 and .20, respectively). For these two branded products, the only significant determinant of *purchase intention* was *subjective norm* (βs = .35 and .34, respectively, and ps < .01). Whereas, for Benetton clothing, the tested model was found to be unable to explain the data (R^2= .06) and the standardized coefficients (βs) did not reach a significant level (ps >.05). Finally, for Intimissimi clothing, Ajzen's (1991) model was able to explain *purchase intention* (R^2= .56), and *attitude* was found as its only determinant (β = .63, p < .01) (see Table 2, for detailed results).

Table 2: *Results of Ajzen's Model (1991)*

	Coffee				Clothing			
	Lavazza (N = 151)		Nescafè (N = 125)		Benetton (N = 152)		Intimissimi (N = 129)	
Variable	B	β	B	β	B	β	B	β
(Constant)	6.07		-7.67		2.51		-15.62**	
ATT	.01	.04	.04	.14	.03	.14	.15	.63**
SN	.13	.35**	.11	.34**	.04	.16	.03	.06
PBC	-.04	-.10	.04	.15	-.01	-.04	.03	.13
F	6.81**		10.30**		2.90*		52.12**	
R^2	.12		.20		.06		.56	
Adj. R^2	.11		.18		.04		.54	

Note: Dependent variable: Purchase intention. * = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .01$. ATT = Attitude; SN = Subjective Norm; PBC = Perceived Behavioral Control.

Secondly, the *purchase intention* of each of the four investigated branded products and each of its significant determinants, as emerged by the application of the TPB (Ajzen 1991), were regressed on the 40 bipolar marker attributes of brand personality. Results, summarized in Tables 3-6 (*below*), show that, as predicted, none of the marker attributes rated as unemotional has a significant effect on *purchase intention* and its determinants. Vice versa, all those marker attributes exerting a significant effect on *purchase intention* and its determinants are characterized by a significant level of emotionality elicited in perceivers.

Table 3: *Impacts of Marker Attributes on the Purchase Intention and Subjective Norm of Lavazza Coffee*

Variable	B	Std. Error	β	*t*	*P*
DV: Purchase Intention					
(Constant)	-53.85	11.75		-4.58	< .001
Stable	3.09	1.49	.22	2.07	.040
Constant	4.16	1.37	.29	3.04	.003
Unsafe	*-3.24*	*1.53*	*-24*	*-2.12*	*.036*
Quiet	4.06	1.16	.35	3.48	.001
Oblivious	*-3.01*	*1.45*	*-.23*	*-2.08*	*.040*
Generous	4.45	1.62	.34	2.75	.007
Hot	4.26	1.27	.30	3.35	.001
Energetic	3.65	1.29	.29	2.84	.005
Imprudent	*-3.97*	*1.28*	*-.29*	*-3.11*	*.002*
R^2 = .53, *Adj*. R^2 = .37, F(40,150) = 3.16, $p < .001$					
DV: Subjective norm					
(Constant)	-10.81	32.48		-.33	.740
Reliable	7.45	3.06	.28	2.43	.017
Calm	8.02	3.15	.29	2.55	.012
Unsafe	*-10.05*	*4.53*	*-.27*	*-2.22*	*.029*
Sensible	11.09	4.96	.28	2.24	.027
R^2 = .47, *Adj*. R^2 = .28, F(40,150) = 2.48, $p < .001$					

Note: N = 151. DV = Dependent variable. Attributes with a negative emotionality are shown in italics. The remaining attributes show a positive emotionality. Attributes showing nonsignificant Beta coefficients ($p. > .05$) were omitted.

Table 4: *Impacts of Marker Attributes on the Purchase Intention and Subjective Norm of Nescafè Coffee*

Variabile	B	Std. Error	β	*t*	*P*
DV: Purchase Intention					
(Constant)	-1.17	8.75		-.13	.894
Friendly	3.11	1.23	.31	2.53	.013
Reliable	2.97	1.11	.34	2.68	.009
Old	*-2.34*	*1.17*	*-.27*	*-2.00*	*.049*
Coarse	*-2.71*	*1.11*	*-.28*	*-2.44*	*.017*
Underdeveloped	*-3.40*	*1.38*	*-.39*	*-2.46*	*.016*
Fragile	*-2.47*	*.95*	*-.29*	*-2.59*	*.011*
Funny	4.47	1.08	.54	4.10	.000
Prudent	3.46	1.60	.30	2.16	.033
$R^2 = .54$ *Adj*. $R^2 = .32$, $F(40,124) = 2.46$, $p < .001$					
DV: Subjective Norm					
(Constant)	-71.69	24.09		-2.98	.004
Refined	9.29	3.06	.31	3.03	.003
Controlled	9.78	2.76	.34	3.54	.001
Fragile	*-6.69*	*2.63*	*-.26*	*-2.54*	*.013*
Funny	7.14	3.00	.29	2.38	.019
$R^2 = .61$, *Adj*. $R^2 = .43$, $F(40,124) = 3.32$, $p < .001$					

Note: $N = 125$. DV = Dependent variable. Attributes with a negative emotionality are shown in italics. The remaining attributes show a positive emotionality. Attributes showing nonsignificant Beta coefficients ($p. > .05$) were omitted.

Table 5: *Impacts of Marker Attributes on the Purchase Intention of Benetton Clothing*

Variable	B	Std. Error	β	*t*	*P*
DV: Purchase Intention					
(Constant)	-10.54	8.33		-1.26	.208
Cheerful	2.18	1.07	.21	2.04	.044
Friendly	3.19	1.05	.31	3.03	.003
Stable	4.08	1.01	.39	4.04	.000
Attentive	2.36	.89	.28	2.66	.009
Dishonest	*-1.59*	*.79*	*-19*	*-2.01*	*.047*
Insensible	*-1.99*	*.86*	*-.23*	*-2.31*	*.023*
Tense	*-2.05*	*.89*	*-.23*	*-2.31*	*.023*
$R^2 = .52$, *Adj*. $R^2 = .34$, $F(40,151) = 2.97$, $p < .001$					

Note: $N = 152$. DV = Dependent variable. Attributes with a negative emotionality are shown in italics. The remaining attributes show a positive emotionality. Attributes showing nonsignificant Beta coefficients ($p. > .05$) were omitted.

Table 6*: Impacts of Marker Attributes on the Purchase Intention and Attitude of Intimissimi Clothing*

Variable	B	Std. Error	β	*t*	*P*
DV: Purchase Intention					
(Constant)	-37.45	11.20		-3.34	.001
Cheerful	9.00	1.95	.61	4.62	.000
Hostile	*-3.89*	*1.72*	*-.21*	*-2.25*	*.027*
Old	*-4.29*	*1.91*	*-.34*	*-2.25*	*.027*
Unsafe	*-3.46*	*1.64*	*-.26*	*-2.11*	*.038*
Modern	5.65	1.60	.48	3.52	.001
Calm	2.66	1.32	.22	2.02	.046
Controlled	3.64	1.49	.32	2.45	.016
Honest	7.64	1.69	.52	4.52	.000
Non original	*-3.82*	*1.80*	*-.35*	*-2.13*	*.036*
Frivolous	*-3.19*	*1.37*	*-.36*	*-2.33*	*.022*
Prudent	3.43	1.41	.28	2.44	.017
Tense	*-4.74*	*1.48*	*-.43*	*-3.20*	*.002*
R^2 = .66 *Adj*. R^2 = .50, $F(40,128) = 4.22$, $p < .001$					
DV: Attitude					
(Constant)	-136.86	45.99		-2.98	.004
Cheerful	22.89	8.00	.37	2.86	.005
Old	*-19.34*	*7.83*	*-.37*	*-2.47*	*.015*
Fanciful	25.23	7.29	.51	3.46	.001
Sincere	17.37	8.10	.30	2.14	.035
Modern	13.48	6.59	.27	2.04	.044
Controlled	29.68	6.10	.64	4.86	.000
Farsighted	21.08	7.35	.32	2.87	.005
Honest	15.51	6.94	.26	2.23	.028
Non original	*-27.03*	*7.38*	*-59*	*-3.66*	*.000*
Fragile	*-15.14*	*7.33*	*-.31*	*-2.07*	*.042*
Frivolous	*-14.37*	*5.63*	*-.39*	*-2.55*	*.012*
Tense	*-28.29*	*6.08*	*-.61*	*-4.65*	*.000*
R^2 = .66, *Adj*. R^2 = .51, $F(40,128) = 4.34$, $p < .001$					

Note: $N = 129$. DV = Dependent variable. Attributes with a negative emotionality are shown in italics. The remaining attributes show a positive emotionality. Attributes showing nonsignificant Beta coefficients ($p. > .05$) were omitted.

It is worth noting also the consistency between the (stimulating or inhibiting) effect of the marker attributes on the purchase intention and its determinants and the (positive or negative) value of their emotionality: marker attributes exerting a stimulating effect on purchase intention are characterized by a positive emotionality; whereas those exerting an inhibiting effect on the purchase intention are characterized by a negative emotionality. Moreover, attributes whose effect on the behavioral intention and its determinants is mostly significant ($p < .01$) are characterized by a higher capacity of eliciting emotions, which are positive in most cases ($Me \geq 2$), in perceivers. In fact, at a brand level, the purchase intention of Lavazza coffee is mostly influenced by marker attributes with a strong positive emotionality ($Me \geq 2$), namely: *constant* ($\beta = .29$, $p = .003$); *quiet* ($\beta = .35$, $p = .001$); *generous* ($\beta = .34$, $p = .007$*), hot* ($\beta = .30$, $p = .001$); *energetic* ($\beta = .29$, $p = .005$). The only marker attribute with a negative emotionality that exerts an inhibiting effect on the purchase

intention is *imprudent* (β = -.29, p = .002). Likewise, as for the purchase intention of Nescafé coffee, it is mostly influenced by marker attributes with a strong positive emotionality (*Me* $\geq$ 2), namely: *reliable* (β = .34, p = .009); and, above all, *funny* (β = .54, p < .001). Subjective norm – which is, as for Lavazza coffee, the only determinant of the purchase intention – was found mostly influenced by those marker attributes such as: *refined* (β = .31, p = .003) and *controlled* (β = .34, p = .001), even though the latter attribute show a relatively low level of positive emotionality (*Me* = 1).

As regards the Benetton clothing, the purchase intention was found mostly influenced by three marker attributes, namely: *friendly* (β = .31, p = .003); *stable* (β = .39, p < .001); and *careful* (β = .28, p = .009). The purchase intention of the Intimissimi clothing, as determined by the attitude, was found to be mostly influenced by the following marker attributes: *cheerful* (β = .61, p < .001); *modern* (β = .48, p = .001); and *honest* (β = .52, p < .001), which are among those mostly capable of eliciting positive emotions in perceivers (*Me* $\geq$ 2). The only marker attribute with a negative emotionality that exerts an inhibiting effect on the purchase intention is *tense* (β = -.43, p = .002). The attitude towards the Intimissimi clothing is positively influenced by *cheerful* (β =. 37, p = .005) and *fanciful* (β = .51, p = .001), which, in turn, show a high level of positive emotionality (*Me* $\geq$ 2); as well as by *controlled* (β = .64, p < .001) and *farsighted* (β = .32, p = .005), which, in turn, show a relatively low level of positive emotionality (*Me* = 1). *Non original* and *tense* (βs = -.59 and .61, respectively, and ps < .001) are the main marker attributes, with a negative emotionality, that inhibit consumers' attitude towards the investigated branded product.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

Our findings allowed to verify both research objectives. Firstly, it was shown that marker attributes, which are defined as the best descriptors of brand personality according to the FFM, have different levels of emotionality, which is a main component of vividness. This allows us to maintain that marketers, when developing communication strategies, should use marker attributes with either a higher or a lower level of emotionality, if they want to be listened to at all: either if they want to elicit intense (either positive or negative) emotional reactions in consumers, such as in the advertising campaigns of hedonic products (entertainment, luxury, etc.), or if they want to preserve reasoning and rational behaviors, such as in comparative ads and in communication strategies aimed at emphasizing the

convenience dimension of purchases. Attributes and, more generally, words should be carefully evaluated by marketers and advertisers, through *ad hoc* research, if the final goal is to influence conveniently consumers' emotional responses, in the same way of other marketing tools (such as packaging) which are usually tested directly on the field.

Secondly, it was shown that only marker attributes with higher levels of emotionality are capable of directly influencing consumers' purchase intention and, indirectly, purchase intention's determinants. These latter variable can be adequately assessed through expectation-value models, such as Ajzen's (1991) TPB: in our study, it was found that *subjective norm*, concerning the perceived social pressures on consumers, was the only antecedent of the purchase intention for both brands of coffee (Lavazza and Nescafé). The reason may be found in that the consumption of coffee, in Italy, generally occurs in a social environment, together with other persons (e.g., family relatives, peers, colleagues, friends) who, in most cases, are considered extremely relevant by perceivers. These occasions when this product is consumed (i.e., at meal-ends, dinners, etc.) can induce consumers to choose a specific brand on the basis of the preferences expressed by their social group of reference.

On the other hand, it was found that the purchase intention of the Benetton clothing was not explained by any of the variables postulated by the TPB. The reason may be that this brand of clothing, generally targeted at young consumers, can be bought under the influence of factors that are not merely cognitive, but linked to the sphere of desires and personal values (see Holbrook 1999); additionally, the relatively low price of the Benetton clothing in Italy could favor impulse-purchases, which cannot be explained by the TPB. Differently, the purchase intention of Intimissimi clothing was found to be determined only by attitude: being mainly a brand of underwear, the purchase intention was reasonably explained mainly by personal preferences, rather than by other factors.

For all these brands, it must be stressed that the ability of emotional marker attributes to influence, either directly or indirectly, consumers' purchase intention was found strictly dependent upon the value of their emotionality. In particular, taking into consideration the mostly significant regression coefficients (ps $< .01$), purchase intention was found to be more sensitive to marker attributes with a positive emotionality, rather than to those with a negative emotionality value. A possible explanation may be found in the fact that positive emotions, as elicited by specific marker attributes, tend to encourage a heuristic processing of the evaluation object and, thus, to be used, either consciously or unconsciously, as information cues acting upon intention. Negative emotions, as elicited by other specific marker attributes, by generating a state of alertness in perceivers, favor a systematic processing of the branded

product, thus reducing their potentially negative impact on the purchase intention (cf. Chaiken 1980; Morris *et al.* 2002). Moreover, it is possible to hypothesize that the effect of the marker attributes of brand personality on the purchase intention and its determinants stems, other than from their emotional interest, from the congruence degree with the perceived image of the branded product. For example, Lavazza coffee, whose purchase intention is influenced by the marker attributes *constant*, *quiet*, *generous*, and *hot*, could be perceived as a product to be consumed leisurely and in a warm environment. Nevertheless, this hypothesis was out of our research objective, but could be further explored in future studies: it would be even interesting to verify whether the emotional interest of an attribute, capable of describing the image of a branded product, depends or not on its capacity to be congruent with the product image as perceived by consumers.

In conclusion, considering the emotional interest as a component of the broader construct of vividness, our results support the hypothesis according to which not all the verbal stimuli that best elicit the image of branded products may impact on consumers' purchase intention, but this is a property *only* of those verbal stimuli that are more vivid (cf. Kisielius and Sternthal 1986). Such a research can help marketers understand which are the marker attributes that, by eliciting positive emotions in consumers, can persuade them to buy their products, thus reducing risk factors connected to expensive advertising campaigns and being more efficient in today's increasingly cluttered advertising environment.

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