BRAND PERSONALITY, CONGRUENCY, AND NET PROMOTER SCORE:

*A University Case Study*

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Brand Personality, Congruency, and Net Promoter Score: A University Case Study

Abstract

Using a university context, this research explores the relationship between student perceptions of university brand personality associations and brand personality congruence on student attitudes and behaviors. This research employs two studies to further develop an understanding of the effects of brand personality congruency on net promoter score and attitude towards the ad, as well as the influence of brand personality congruency and advertisement content on the relationship between attitude toward the ad and student promotion intentions. Data were collected from 327 undergraduate students using an online survey and 382 undergraduate students using an online, survey-based experimental design. The results of the online survey suggest select brand personality associations influence net promoter scores and that net promoter scores vary by students’ self-congruency and ideal-congruency. The results of the experiment suggest brand personality congruency is shown to play multiple roles in consumer perceptions of advertising. The research provides important managerial implications for university branding efforts.
Brand Personality, Congruency, and Net Promoter Score: A University Case Study

Introduction

Traditional university enrollment across the United States has seen a great deal of instability in the past decade due to funding and competitive challenges. According to Witter (2015), a sharp downturn in endowment fund investment income, paired with a decrease in charitable donations from many major donors who were also feeling the effects of the recession, left many universities scrambling. Accordingly, higher education institutions are expected continue to cut costs by reducing course offerings, merging redundant departments, eliminating specialized programs, and implementing hiring and salary freezes (Witter, 2015). Though the industry revenue as a whole is projected to grow at an average of 2.4% per year to 2020, the national unemployment rate is expected to decrease, representing a threat to educational institutions as more Americans are expected to choose entry-level careers over a traditional university education (Witter, 2015).

At the same time, for-profit educational institutions, which include organizations providing educational experiences in various settings such as the workplace, at home, online, and through other forms of technological correspondence, are experiencing enrollment growth. This industry achieved double-digit revenue growth in the years following the recession, peaking at 25.9% growth in 2010 (Isakowitz, 2015). Although online degrees and training certifications have become more common in the past decade, criticism regarding the industry’s admissions and marketing procedures have led to multiple investigations that will ultimately
determine the future for member organizations; but for the time being, the industry continues to pose a threat to traditional universities (Isakowitz, 2015).

To remain relevant in the minds of potential students, universities are investing in university branding in order to differentiate themselves from competitors (Hanover Research, 2014). According to the American Marketing Association, a brand is “a name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller’s good or service as distinct from those of other sellers” (American Marketing Association, n.d.). Successful branding can add value to an organization through customer loyalty and recognition (Hunt and Mello, 2015). According to Lamb, Hair, and McDaniel (2015), the most important aspect of branding is to build product identification, allowing marketers to distinguish their products from similar products sold by competitors. An organization with a high level of brand equity has high awareness, perceived quality, and brand loyalty among customers, thus influencing perceived product value (Lamb, Hair, and McDaniel, 2015).

Proponents of university branding argue that it is necessary for institutions (Perlmutter, 2014) because branding provides opportunities to market institutions in a way for prospective students to quickly understand institutional values, as well as the key benefits of the educational programs (Baworowky, 2013). In the academic literature, previous research suggests university branding has an impact on students’ supportive attitudes (e.g., Sung & Yang, 2008), customer lifetime value (e.g., Wang, Chen, & Chen, 2012), student commitment (e.g., Hosseini & Nahad, 2012), and choice of institution (e.g., Joseph, Mullen, & Spake, 2012).
Although university branding generally builds awareness and shapes the image of the university, specific branding initiatives are customized to the institution in order to accurately reflect the student experience (Joseph, Mullen, & Spake, 2012). Previous university branding research has used variations of the case study approach to explore university branding at educational institutions in the UK (Balmer & Liao, 2012), Thailand (Polyorat, 2011), South Africa (Botha, Farshid, & Pitt, 2011), Taiwan (Wang, Chen, & Chen, 2012), and the United States (Lee, Miloch, Kraft, & Tatum, 2008). Similarly, this research explores branding efforts in a particular university using a case study approach.

Two studies were employed to understand the effects of university branding on student supportive behaviors and attitudes. The first study, *University Branding, Congruency, and NPS*, explores the influence of university-identified brand personality associations and brand personality congruency on students’ self-reported university promotion intentions using an online survey of university students. The second study, *Branding, Congruency, and Attitude toward the Ad*, analyzes student responses to different visual communication messages and explores the moderating effects of brand personality. Combined, the two studies provide for a better understanding of the role of brand personality and brand personality congruency on student supportive attitudes and behaviors.
Study 1: University Branding, Congruency, and NPS

Extant research provides insights about the necessity of branding campaigns from higher educational institutions, but there is yet to be much discussion about the effects that university branding can have on student perceptions and intentions. The first study in this body of research was developed to explain the relationships between university branding elements, student personality congruency, and student intentions to promote the institution.

Literature Review

The first study measures three distinct constructs: brand personality, congruency, and net promoter score (NPS). The following provides a literature review of each construct.

Brand Personality. Researchers have developed different theories of personality (e.g. Freud’s psychoanalytic theory, Jung’s analytic theory, Lewin’s field theory, etc.) that have led to multiple interpretations of personality, which can be defined in any number of ways depending on the theory used (Hall & Lindzey, 1957). For the purpose of this research, personality is defined as “that which gives order and congruence to all the different kinds of behavior in which the individual engages” (Hall & Lindzey, 1957, pg. 9). One theoretical perspective of personality is the trait approach. A trait is a mental structure, or an inference derived from observed behavior that describes one’s tendency to act in a relatively consistent manner (Hall & Lindzey, 1957). Arguably, one of the most popular models of the trait approach to personality is the five-factor model, which suggests that personality traits can be measured by five
factors (Digman, 1990). McDougall (1932) suggests that the five factors could consist of intellect, character, temperament, disposition, and temper; further explaining that “each of these [factors] is highly complex [and] comprises many variables” (McDougal, 1932, pg. 15). Over time, the original five factors evolved into (1) extroversion, (2) agreeableness, (3) openness to experience, (4) neuroticism, and (5) conscientiousness (McCrae & Costa, 1991). An individual’s measurements for each of the five traits combine to form a collective image of that individual’s personality at a global level (McCrae, Costa, & Busch, 1986).

More recently, researchers have examined how brands can develop personalities in order to more effectively interact with consumers (e.g., Lee & Kang, 2013; Ivens & Valta, 2012). Aaker (1997, pg. 347) defines brand personality as “the set of human characteristics associated with a brand” and identified a range of characteristics including sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness. For example, a brand like Hallmark would rank high in sincerity, while a brand like Jaguar might rank equally as high in sophistication (Grumbein, 2013). Brand personalities can parallel human personality in many ways, as humans often describe brands using demographics, psychographics, and human personality traits (Grumbein, 2013). While previous studies have generally measured brand personality using Aaker’s (1997) “Big Five” dimensions of brand personality, organizations may choose to identify adjectives that describe their brand specifically, rather than choose to measure brand personality using the standard scale. For example, Heere (2010) measured brand personality by first asking managers to identify personality
associations they implement while marketing the brand, and then asking consumers how well the organization represented each of the associations identified.

Research suggests brand personality can play a role in the minds of consumers in the form of brand perceptions and purchasing behaviors. For example, Keller (1993) found that while product attributes offer a utilitarian function to the consumer, brand personality serves as a more symbolic function of self-expression. Aaker (1996) argues that brand personality can influence consumers in three ways: (1) consumers who find a brand personality attractive are more likely to see their connection with the brand as a form of self-expression, (2) brand personalities can aid in the fostering of the relationship between brand and consumer, and (3) when used effectively, a brand personality can communicate the functional features of that brand.

Congruency. Arguably, brand personalities are perceived and evaluated by consumers within the framework of their own personality traits. Research suggests a fit between consumer and brand personality traits (i.e., self-congruency) may be a helpful tool in building and managing brands (e.g., Malär, Krohmer, Hoyer, & Nyffenegger, 2011; Aaker, 1999; Sirgy, 1982). Specifically, the five dimensions of brand personality have been loosely linked to the five-factor model of human personality traits (e.g., Lin, 2010; Fennis, Pruyn, & Maasland, 2005; Caprara, Barbaranelli, & Guido, 2001). Dikcius, Seimiene, and Zaliene (2013) suggests that the human personality trait of agreeableness has been linked to the brand personality traits of excitement, competence, and sincerity; the human trait of extroversion has been linked to the brand traits of excitement and ruggedness; and the brand trait of
competence has been linked to the human traits of conscientiousness and openness to new experiences. However, research has not associated the human trait of neuroticism or the brand trait of sophistication to a trait from the opposite category (Dikcius, Seimiene, & Zaliene, 2013).

Arguably, an increase in perceived match between a brand personality and consumer personality could lead to positive attitudes and behavioral intentions toward the brand. Malär, Krohmer, Hoyer, & Nyffenegger (2011) suggest that self-congruence with a brand tends to form strong emotional attachments to that brand. These feelings include affection, passion, and connection (Thomson, MacInnis, & Park, 2005). However, Seimiene (2012) argues that it is widely acknowledged by researchers that consumers are likely to purchase and associate with brands that have personalities that are similar to their own, yet also argues that the lack of research specifically studying personality match is enough to call for further investigation.

**Net Promoter Score and Word-of-Mouth.** In the last decade, a fundamental shift in managerial thinking has prompted individuals in the business world to reconsider how loyalty and customer satisfaction are measured and evaluated from an organizational perspective (Keiningham, Aksoy, Cooil, Andreassen, and Williams, 2008). In 2003, Reichheld (2003) introduced the Net Promoter Score (NPS), a common survey-based metric used to calculate customer loyalty. Keiningham et al. (2008) describes how the metric works:

NPS is derived from survey responses to a likelihood to recommend question on an 11-point scale. The proportion of respondents rating the firm a 6 or less
(called ‘Detractors’) is subtracted from the proportion of respondents rating the firm a 9 or 10 (called ‘Promoters’); this difference represents a firm’s NPS. The rationale was that people highly likely to recommend a firm were implied as being loyal to it. (2008, p. 82)

As such, NPS is a tool that organizations can use to measure word-of-mouth intentions.

Word-of-mouth (WOM) behavior is a marketing term that refers to the transmission of information between consumers. In its earliest form, WOM is characterized as oral communication regarding a brand, product, or service that happens between two people when the receiver perceives that the sender is independent of the organization in question (Arndt, 1967). Researchers have been studying WOM for decades, evolving from merely telling others about new products (e.g., Arndt, 1968; Dichter, 1966) into understanding WOM behaviors in reaction to both a positive and negative customer experience (Richins, 1983). More recently, the value and effects of positive and negative WOM has been a topic of interest. In a consumer products setting, Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006) found that consumer word-of-mouth has the power to affect the purchasing behavior of others, in which positive WOM reinforces purchases, while negative WOM increases shopping behavior. Research has also found that negative WOM has a greater impact on others than positive WOM (e.g., Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006).

In the university setting, studies have examined the relationship between university branding and WOM. Using a case study approach at a university in
Thailand, Polyorat (2011) found that some brand personality characteristics had more influence on WOM as compared to other personality characteristics. Casidy (2014) found that student perceptions of a university’s brand orientation moderated the relationship between service quality, loyalty, and WOM behaviors. Using respondents from multiple universities in Australia, Wymer and Casidy (2015) found brand strength – defined by brand familiarity, brand remarkability, and brand attitude – has a positive effect on WOM comments. However, the limited number of previous studies suggests additional research is needed to fully understand the effects branding on WOM behavior and student intentions in a university setting.

**Ohio University Branding**

The case context chosen for this study is Ohio University, which is a four-year, public research university with its main campus located in the small town of Athens, Ohio. Established in 1804, Ohio University is the oldest public institution of higher learning in the State of Ohio, and the first in the Northwest Territory of the United States. The university’s Carnegie profile describes the undergraduate program at Ohio University as full-time, four-year, selective, lower transfer-in, and primarily residential (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2011). According to the Ohio University website,

Ohio University strives to be the best student-centered, transformative learning community in America, where more than 39,000 students realize their promise, faculty advance knowledge, staff achieve excellence, and alumni become global leaders. OHIO is committed to fostering, embracing, and celebrating
diversity in all its forms. Our Athens Campus offers students a residential
learning experience in one of the nation’s most picturesque academic settings.
Ohio University holds as its central purpose the intellectual and personal
development of its students. (Ohio University, 2015)

In 2007, Ohio University began efforts to revitalize the university brand
(Morris, 2013a). In a series of articles spanning more than five years (2010-2015),
Ohio University’s Chief Marketing Officer shared stories about the University’s
efforts towards developing and implementing a cohesive branding strategy (Ohio
University, n.d.). Branding efforts included consistency in brand identity markers such
as design, colors, typology, symbols, logos, and taglines as well as congruency in
brand meaning through messaging, taglines, media, and personality characteristics.

For example, Ohio University’s Office of Communications and Marketing
identified personality characteristics that align with the University’s brand by
surveying over 1,500 faculty, staff, students, alumni, parents, and board members
(Morris, 2011). According to Ohio University’s Brand Standards,

When defining the brand of any institution or organization, one helpful
exercise is to describe how the brand would think, act, and feel as a person.
The exercise helps determine the personality of a brand. … We could reference
its intellect, its place in history, and its continuous thirst for knowledge. …
These additional personality traits highlighted below came to the forefront
during our brand definition exercises and are directly connected to the Brand
Positioning Statement: Accessible, Authentic, Collaborative, Creative, Diverse,
Enriching, Global, Individualistic, Innovative, Student-Centered, and Historic.

(Ohio University, 2014, p. 6)

Research Hypotheses

Using Ohio University’s self-identified brand personality associations, this research aims to explore the influence of the perceived brand personality on university promotion intentions. Aaker (1996) suggests that brand personality perceptions can influence consumer attitudes toward a brand. Because consumers who perceive a brand personality as attractive are more likely to see their connection with the brand as a form of self-expression (Aaker 1996), one could reasonably argue that consumers who perceive a brand’s personality as marketers intend would be more likely to have a positive attitude toward the brand. As such, students who perceive the Ohio University brand as the organization defines it will be more likely to act as promoters of the institution.

H1: University-identified brand personality associations will positively influence NPS.

Previous research has also demonstrated how congruency between a brand image and one’s self-image influences consumer attitudes and behaviors (e.g., Kuenzel & Halliday, 2010; Sirgy 1985; Sirgy, Grewal, & Mangleburg, 2000). Generally, actual self-image refers as how consumers see themselves (i.e., their personal identity) while self-congruency refers to the congruence or similarity between a consumers’ self-concept and the personality of a brand (Sirgy, 1982). Sirgy (1982) argues that consumers purchase goods to express their own self-concept
because brands are carriers of symbolic personal and social meanings. More specifically, research suggests that a higher level of brand personality congruence leads to an increased likelihood that the consumer will have a favorable attitude toward the brand (Kuenzel & Halliday, 2010).

Sirgy (1985, p. 197) argues that self-congruency affects consumer behavior through the activation and operation of the self-consistency motive, which refers to “an individual’s need to act in ways that are consistent with his/her self-perception.” In the retail context, Sirgy, Grewal, and Mangleburg (2000) argue that shoppers who experience a match between the image of a store and their actual self-image will be motivated to shop at that store. In a business-to-business sales context, Ahearne, Bhattacharya, and Gruen (2005) argue that, for consumers who identify with a brand, purchasing the brand becomes an act of self-expression, and behaviors such as brand repurchasing and spreading positive word-of-mouth are ways in which consumers can express their identification. As such, students who perceive Ohio University as consistent with their own personality associations will be more likely to act as promoters of the institution.

H2: Students with higher (lower) self-congruency will have higher (lower) NPS scores.

NPS may also be influenced by ideal-congruency, which refers to the degree of match between the consumer’s ideal self-image and brand image (Sirgy, Grewal, & Mangleburg, 2000). Sirgy (1985, p. 197) argues that ideal-congruency affects consumer behavior through the activation and operation of the self-esteem motive,
which refers to “an individual’s need to act in ways that are instrumental to achieving goals that maintain and/or increase self-regard.” In the context of car buying, Kuenzel and Halliday (2010) found that ideal-congruency influences brand identification and brand loyalty. In the university context, ideal-congruency refers to students’ aspirational personality associations compared to students’ perceived university brand associations. Given that one of the reasons for attending a university is to learn and develop toward goals, students who perceive Ohio University as consistent with their aspirational personality associations will be more likely to act as promoters of the institution.

H3: Students with higher (lower) ideal-congruency will have higher (lower) NPS scores.

Methodology

After approval from the university’s ethics and research committee was obtained, data were collected using an online questionnaire. The sample included undergraduate students enrolled in a subject pool. Students registered in the subject pool self-selected to participate. The total number of potential undergraduate students in the subject pool was 654; 341 students completed the survey for a 51.2% response rate. Students enrolled in two marketing research classes (N = 65) pre-tested the survey for clarity and ambiguity.

Measures. The final survey included multiple sub-sections: informed consent, perceptions of the university’s brand personality associations, general perceptions of the university, behavioral intentions toward the university, self-reported personality
characteristics, and select demographics. As the primary dependent variable, NPS was measured using a single item with a 10-point graphic rating scale. Brand personality was measured using Heere’s (2010) approach. First, a list of brand personality associations was obtained from the university; this included 12 brand personality associations used in marketing materials across the university system: accessible, authentic, collaborative, creative, diverse, enriching, global, individualistic, innovative, student-centered, historic, and intelligent. Second, respondents indicated the extent to which they believed the brand personality associations accurately described the university using a seven-point rating scale.

To measure self-congruency, respondents were asked the extent to which personality associations similar to the university brand personality associations accurately described him/her as an individual. Scores for each of the 12 self-associations were then compared to the scores for university brand associations. Respondents were then classified into one of four groups based upon the total perceived match between actual-self ratings and university ratings: (1) congruency where 50% or more of the associations were rated the same for the university and self (self-congruent), (2) self-favorable incongruency where 50% or more of the university ratings were lower than self-ratings (self-high), (3) university-favorable incongruency where 50% or more of the university ratings were higher than self-ratings (self-low), and (4) mixed incongruency where no association category – same, self-favorable, or university-favorable – was greater than 50% (self-mixed). To measure ideal-congruency, respondents were asked the extent to which individual personality
associations paralleling the university brand personality associations accurately described who s/he wants to be as an individual. Scores for each of the 12 ideal-associations were then compared to the scores for the brand associations. Paralleling classifications for self-congruency, respondents were then classified into one of four groups – ideal-congruent, ideal-high, ideal-low, and ideal-mixed – based upon the total perceived match between the ideal-self ratings and university ratings.

**Sample.** After excluding respondents with missing data, the final sample included 327 undergraduate students enrolled in the main campus of Ohio University. The sample was demographically homogenous; most respondents were American (97.5%), enrolled full-time (98.8%), lived on or near the main campus (90.7%), attended the University starting as a freshman (90.8%), and were between the ages of 18-23 (97.2%). The sample represented two genders (56.1% female) and a variety of class ranks (38.8% sophomore; 37.2% junior; 21.6% senior). Average self-reported grade-point-average was 3.23 (SD = 0.42). The majority of respondents had at least some non-academic involvement with the university; 77.4% were members of at least one student organization and 79.8% voluntarily attended one university-sponsored student activity or event in the previous six months. In comparison with the university’s population demographics, the respondents were generally representative of the university’s undergraduate population.

**Results**

For the first hypothesis, multivariate regression analysis was used to test the influence of perceptions of brand associations on NPS. The model included 12 brand
personality characteristics as independent variables and NPS for the university as the dependent variable. The assumptions for multiple regression analysis were confirmed. Collinearity statistics for variance inflation factor were below the commonly used cutoff point of 10, confirming the absence of multicollinearity in the data. The Durbin–Watson coefficient was less than 2.0, which confirmed that error terms were not correlated.

Overall, the regression was significant \( (F(12, 275) = 13.19, p < 0.01, \text{Adjusted } R^2 = .34) \). Of the 12 brand personality associations examined, four were significant: enriching \( (\beta = .20, t = 2.62, p < .01) \), innovative \( (\beta = .16, t = 2.18, p < .05) \), student-centered \( (\beta = .13, t = 2.07, p < .05) \), and intelligent \( (\beta = .16, t = 2.18, p < .05) \). Accessible, authentic, collaborative, creative, diverse, global, individualistic, and historic were not significant predictors, \( p > .05 \). Regression statistics and Pearson correlation coefficients are provided in Table 1.

For the second hypothesis, one-way between subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test for mean differences in average NPS between four groups: self-congruent \( (n = 78) \), self-high \( (n = 75) \), self-low \( (n = 97) \), and self-mixed \( (n = 76) \). Results of Levene’s test for homogeneity of variances indicated variances among the groups were not equal \( (F = 10.68, p < .05) \). As such, an adjusted \( F \) statistic (Welch) and post-hoc analysis in which equal variances were not assumed (Games-Howell) were used to test the model. Overall, NPS varied by self-congruency, adjusted \( F(3, 168.75) = 13.18, p < .01 \). Games-Howell post hoc procedure indicated average NPS for the self-congruent group \( (M_{\text{Self-Congruent}} = 9.33, SD_{\text{Self-Congruent}} = 1.06) \) was
significantly higher than both the self-high group \((M_{\text{Self-High}} = 7.95, SD_{\text{Self-High}} = 1.96)\) and the self-mixed group \((M_{\text{Self-Mixed}} = 8.50, SD_{\text{Self-Mixed}} = 1.64), p < .01. However, there was not significant difference in average NPS between the self-congruent group and the self-low group \((M_{\text{Self-Low}} = 9.23, SD_{\text{Self-Low}} = 1.19), p > .05. Descriptive statistics are provided in Table 2.

For the third hypothesis, one-way between subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test for significant mean differences in NPS. However, due to a small number of respondents classified in the ideal-low group \((n = 18)\), the ANOVA only included three groups: ideal-congruent \((n = 105)\), ideal-high \((n = 146)\), and ideal-mixed \((n = 55)\). Results of Levene’s test for homogeneity of variances indicated that variances among the groups were not equal \((F = 18.34, p < .05)\). As such, an adjusted \(F\) statistic (Welch) and post-hoc analysis in which equal variances were not assumed (Games-Howell) were used to test the model. Overall, NPS varied by ideal-congruency, adjusted \(F(2, 156.23) = 26.77, p < .01. Games-Howell post hoc procedure indicated the average NPS for the ideal-congruent group \((M_{\text{Ideal-Congruent}} = 9.50, SD_{\text{Ideal-Congruent}} = 1.06)\) was significantly higher than both the ideal-high group \((M_{\text{Ideal-High}} = 8.18, SD_{\text{Ideal-High}} = 1.81)\) and the ideal-mixed group \((M_{\text{Ideal-Mixed}} = 8.93, SD_{\text{Ideal-Mixed}} = 1.15), p < .01. Furthermore, the average NPS for the ideal-mixed group was significantly higher than the ideal-high group, \(p < .01.\) Descriptive statistics are provided in Table 2.
Discussion

For a specific university context, the results of this study suggest that student perceptions of select university brand personality associations influence NPS. Specifically, four of the 12 brand personality associations positively influenced NPS: enriching, innovative, student-centered, and intelligent. These findings are similar to Polyorat (2011), which argues that each dimension of brand personality may exhibit different levels of influence on consumer behavior depending upon the consumption motive and context. Arguably, one plausible explanation for the results is that the brand personality associations exhibiting a significant, positive influence are those most closely associated with individual student educational experiences. Specifically, one might argue that students associate enriching with building their own skills and abilities, innovative with novel experiences they have had, student-centered with the university’s responsiveness to their individual needs, and intelligent with their own personal intellectual growth. Comparatively, associations such as accessible, diverse, and global may be more closely linked to the collective student body while authentic and historic are linked to the institution. From a managerial perspective, the results suggest that universities should highlight individually-relevant brand associations to influence positive promotion behaviors.

The results of this study also suggest that NPS scores varied by self-congruency and ideal-congruency. For self-congruency, the results indicate that the average NPS for students who perceived the university brand associations as generally congruent with their actual-self (i.e., 50% or more match) was significantly higher
than the average NPS for students who rated themselves as higher than the university.
In terms of NPS classifications, 82.0% of students in the self-congruent group are classified as Promoters (i.e., a rating of 9 or 10) while only 48.0% of students in the self-high group and 57.9% of students in the ideal-mixed group are classified as Promoters. As such, the results generally support the self-congruity theory, which suggests that individuals behave in ways consistent with his/her own self-perception (Sirgy, 1985). However, the results also indicate that the average NPS for students who rated their actual-self as generally lower than the university (i.e., less than a 50% match with university-favorable ratings) was statistically equal to the average NPS for the self-congruent group. Specifically, 80.4% of students in the self-low group are classified as Promoters.

A possible explanation for the self-congruency results may be revealed by examining the results for ideal-congruency. For ideal-congruency, the results indicate that the average NPS for students who perceived the university brand associations as generally congruent with their ideal-self (i.e., 50% or more match) was significantly higher than the average NPS for students who rated themselves as higher than the university (i.e., ideal-high and ideal-mixed). In terms of NPS classifications, 77.6% of students in the ideal-congruent group are classified as Promoters (i.e., a rating of 9 or 10) while only 52.1% of students in the ideal-high group and 69.1% of students in the ideal-mixed group are classified as Promoters. As such, the results also support the self-esteem theory, which suggests that individuals behave in ways consistent with their aspirational self-perceptions (Sirgy, 1985).
From a managerial perspective, the results suggest that universities should not only build brands with the purpose of engaging prospective students who are a good fit with the university’s values and benefits (Baworowky, 2013), yet also with the purpose of engaging prospective students who aspire to be a good fit with the university’s values and benefits. For example, Ohio University’s Vision is to be “the nation’s best transformative learning community where students realize their promise, faculty advance knowledge, staff achieve excellence, and alumni become global leaders” (Ohio University, 2015). In the case of Ohio University, its branding efforts are driven by the brand promise to be student-centered and enriching by providing a transformative student experience (Morris, 2010). For example, Ohio University’s brand tagline – “it’s you” with brackets (i.e., “it’s y{ }u”) – is a registered trademark that has become an integral part of Ohio University’s branding strategy (Morris, 2014). The tagline was specifically designed to emphasize the heart of Ohio University: providing an engaging student experience that empowers students to transform their aspirations into achievements (Morris, 2013b). As such, Ohio University branding emphasizes educational experiences that provide opportunities for students to become their ideal self.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, the first study explored the relationship between students’ perceptions of brand personality associations and two types of person-brand personality congruence on students’ net promoter score using a specific university context. The results found that four of the 12 brand personality associations positively
influenced net promoter scores: enriching, innovative, student-centered, and intelligent. The results also indicate that self-congruency and ideal-congruency positively influence net promoter scores. Combined, the results suggest that students who either believe the university’s brand personality matches who they are or who they want to be are most likely to be promoters of the university.
Study 2: Branding, Congruency, and Attitude toward the Ad

While the first study in this body of research examined the relationship between brand personality congruency and university promotions, the design of the first study failed to apply the findings to a real-world context. As such, the second study is designed to further explore how brand personality congruency influences the way in which consumers perceive advertisements with different types of content, and how their level of personality congruence effects the relationships between attitudes and intentions. The following study analyzes how organizations can apply brand personality congruency research to their marketing tactics in order to foster beneficial intentions among viewers.

Literature Review

Marketers have long used advertising as a form of communication with potential customers. Defined by Lamb, Hair, and McDaniel (2015) as “impersonal, one-way mass communication about a product or organization that is paid for by a marketer,” advertising plays a key role in an organization’s promotional mix. Marketers can use advertisements to inform, persuade, and remind prospective customers about products and their associated benefits (Hunt and Mello, 2015).

Advertisement Content. While there is extant research about the effectiveness of advertisement content (e.g., Anderson and Renault, 2004; Bertrand, Karla, Mullainathan, Shafir, and Zinman, 2009; Dahl, Frankenberger, and Manchanda, 2003), surprisingly little research has been done to understand how image content mediates consumer perceptions and behaviors. In one of the few studies, Manfredo
(1989) used a postcard format depicting images that were determined to be extreme opposites, and asked participants to respond to the postcard they were assigned. This study found that picture-audience congruence affects conversion rate – participants interested in one of the images responded well to that postcard, and were less likely to respond to the postcard of lesser interest (Manfredo, 1989). This study laid a foundation for research about image-population congruency in advertisements.

Laskey, Seaton, and Nicholls (1994) used different images in advertisements for travel agencies in order to further understand how image content can influence perceptions and behaviors. This study employs five stimuli: verbal-only informational and transformational ads, informational and transformational ads including pictures, and a control advertisement that each participant viewed. The results show that adding a photograph to a transformational advertisement strongly increases the aesthetic and emotional response to that advertisement. Additionally, the study found that the two different pictures that were used elicited similar responses (Laskey, Seaton, and Nicholls, 1994). While there is a clear distinction in response to ads with and without images, there is little explanation in extant research about how different types of images, used as advertising content, can influence viewer perceptions of the advertisement.

**Brand Personification.** As previously discussed, brands can be evaluated using personality characteristics. Arguably, one way marketers can communicate a brand’s personality is through the use of advertising. Advertising can include many factors to influence perceptions, including copy elements, graphic elements, color,
layout, size and shape, material, and placement (Hudgins, n.d.). Furthermore, extant research suggests that advertising elements like slogans, pictures, and celebrity endorsers can influence consumer perceptions of the brand as a whole (Bambauer-Sachse, Hüttl, and Gierl, 2011).

One way marketers can influence brand perceptions is through personification of the brand. Extant research suggests that brand personification in advertising can include outcomes such as increased consumer attributions of brand personality, as well as increased emotional connections with the brand (Delbaere, McQuarrie, and Phillips, 2011). Cohen (2014) defines brand personification as “the use by a brand of a character with human-like characteristics in packaging, promotion, public relations, or for other marketing-related purposes” (page 3). Through an exploration of brand personification tactics, Cohen (2014) suggests that brands can be personified by celebrities or identifiable characters (such as mascots), but can also be personified by non-specific representatives of “real people” and consumers themselves. Using celebrities, Mishra (2015) found that attitude toward the advertisement was significantly higher when the perceived personality of the celebrity endorser matched the perceived personality of the brand. As such, brand personality congruency with the celebrity representing the brand in an advertisement has the ability to influence consumer attitudes; however, does not appear to influence consumer attitude toward the brand or purchase intentions. This finding could indicate that brand personality congruency is not as influential as extant research suggests in predicting and influencing consumer behaviors.
Additionally, Fleck, Michel, and Zeitoun (2014) looked at the difference in effectiveness between celebrity spokespeople, CEOs, and employees as ordinary people. The results of this study indicate that regular people and employees should be portrayed as just that – regular people – in order to maintain viewer trust. Additionally, celebrities risk losing credibility when they are not perceived as congruent with the brand, which refers to the influence of brand personality congruency on consumer perceptions. Finally, CEOs are generally well-liked as spokespeople for brands – and do not face issues with brand congruence – because they automatically have a great deal of brand equity due to their position within the organization (Fleck, Michel, and Zeitoun, 2014).

Cohen (2014) suggests brands may also use brand personification tactics involving identifiable characters. As an alternative to using real spokespeople, brands can develop mascots to match the brand. The effectiveness of celebrity and mascot representation was analyzed by Malik and Guptha (2014), who found that strong brand mascots are, in fact, more effective than celebrity endorsements in terms of consumer purchasing intentions. While some tactics of brand personification are more effective than others, each of these tactics can be used in an advertising setting to build consumer perceptions of the brand, helping to shape the perceived brand personality.

**Attitude toward the Advertisement.** Researchers have been using consumer attitudes toward advertisements as a way to assess the effectiveness of advertisements for decades (i.e., Macklin, Bruvold, and Shea, 1985; Madden, Allen, and Twibble, 1988; Mitchell and Olsen, 1981; etc.). Scales to measure attitude toward the
advertisement are plentiful, but most scales are similar in nature, consisting of several sets of bipolar Likert scales asking the participant to rank the advertisement on cognitive (e.g., interesting/boring, informative/uninformative, etc.) and affective (e.g., pleasant/unpleasant, nice/awful, etc.) characteristics.

Shimp (1981) tested the mediating relationships of attitude toward the ad and attitude toward the brand on consumer purchase intentions and found that attitude toward the brand mediates the relationship between attitude toward the ad and consumer purchase intentions. This article provided researchers with a framework to analyze the effectiveness of advertisements, which has been used extensively over the past few decades (e.g., MacKenzie, Lutz, and Belch, 1986; Brown and Stayman, 1992; Cartwright, McCormick, and Warnaby, 2016; etc.). Extant research suggests that measuring ad attitude could be the best indicator of advertising effectiveness (Haley and Baldinger, 1991), and other research indicates that ad attitudes influence consumer actions (e.g., Burke and Edell 1989; Homer 1990; Miniard, Bhatla, and Rose 1990, etc.). Overall, this theoretical framework suggests that ad attitudes can be very telling of consumer intentions.

**Research Hypotheses**

While there is not research specifically evaluating the relationship between brand personality congruency and attitude toward an ad, extant research does provide evidence that attitude toward the advertisement can influence attitude toward the brand. For example, while Shimp (1981) found that attitude toward the brand mediates the relationship between attitude toward the ad and consumer purchase intentions, yet
Liu, Li, Mizerski, and Soh (2011) found that while user and usage imagery congruency are both strong predictors of brand attitude and loyalty for luxury brands, brand personality congruency is insignificant. While extant research provides mixed evidence on brand personality congruency as a mediating variable for consumer goods purchase intentions, this research proposes that it may have more of an impact on high-involvement consumer decisions. As such, attitude toward the ad is mediated by level of personality self-congruency.

H1: Students with higher (lower) self-congruency will have higher (lower) levels of attitude toward the ad.

Extant research also suggests that attitude toward the ad can influence a wide variety of consumer behaviors. Shimp (1981) suggests attitude toward an ad can influence consumer purchase intentions. Olney, Holbrook, and Batra (1991) found that a viewer’s attitude toward an ad can translate into actual viewing behaviors, such as zipping (fast-forwarding through prerecorded ads) and zapping (changing channels). Mackenzie, Lutz, and Belch (1986) tested competing hypotheses and found that attitude toward the ad is an influencer of brand attitude in two ways, both directly and indirectly. Extant research suggests that attitude toward the ad can influence consumers in many ways. As such, one plausible hypothesis is that attitude toward the ad may also influence the consumer’s likeliness to recommend the involved brand using the advertisement.

However, brand congruency theory (Kuenzel and Halliday, 2010) suggests that the relationship between attitude toward the ad and NPS will vary by brand
congruency. Specifically, consumers with high brand congruency are likely to identify more closely with the brand, increasing their brand loyalty. As such, it is likely that the relationship between attitude toward the ad and NPS for personality-congruent participants will differ from that of individuals who are not identified as congruent.

H2: The variance in NPS explained by attitude toward the ad will vary by brand personality congruency.

As suggested by Manfredo (1989), similar advertisements with different image content can evoke different behaviors among viewers. Similar to the way Laskey, Seaton, and Nicholls (1994) demonstrated that the level of content descriptiveness can also invoke more pronounced viewer reactions, one could reasonably argue that level of image descriptiveness within an advertisement may influence viewer behavior. In this study, three similar Ohio University advertisements with image variation (generic/university, buildings/institutional, and people/students) were developed to assess the effectiveness of advertisement image descriptiveness as a moderator between self-congruency and attitude toward the ad.

H3: Self-congruency will moderate the relationship between advertisement content and attitude toward the ad.

Methodology

As an extension of the first study, the second study includes stimuli in order to further understand how respondent attitude toward the advertisement moderates the relationship between personality self-congruency and likeliness to recommend the university using the advertisement. After approval from the university’s ethics and
research committee was obtained, data were collected using an online questionnaire. The sample included undergraduate students enrolled in a subject pool. Students registered in the subject pool self-selected to participate. The total number of active undergraduate students in the subject pool was 835; 406 students completed the survey for a 48.6% response rate. Students enrolled in two marketing research classes ($N = 65$) pre-tested the survey for clarity and ambiguity.

**Measures.** The final survey included multiple sub-sections: informed consent, a quasi-experiment with a postcard-style advertisement stimulus, perceptions of the university’s brand personality associations and general perceptions of the university, behavioral intentions toward the university, self-reported personality characteristics, and select demographics.

Participants were randomly assigned to view one of three similar advertisements for the university. Each advertisement contains six photographs arranged around the university’s academic logo, and participants are told the advertisement is a postcard that the university is considering sending to prospective students. Each advertisement hosts a different set of photographs: (1) the generic advertisement contains photographs that are related to the university experience, but not necessarily associated with the institution (e.g., textbooks, a classroom, etc.); (2) the institutional advertisement hosts photos of identifiable landmarks at the institution without people; (3) the personal advertisement includes photos of students having personal experiences at the institution (e.g., sports fans, researching in the lab, student organizations, etc.).
As the primary dependent variable, NPS was measured using a single item with a 10-point graphic rating scale. In order to make the most sense in a postcard advertisement context, a scale to measure attitude toward the advertisement was developed using cognitive and affective items from preexisting scales. The selected characteristics, as well as their origins, are as follows:

- **Effective – Ineffective**: Williams and Drolet (2005), Miniard, Bhatla, and Rose (1990)
- **Clear – Not Clear**: Bezjian-Avery, Calder, and Iacobucci (1998)

Similar to the first study, this study also measured brand personality using Heere’s (2010) approach, employing the same university-identified personality characteristics. Respondents indicated the extent to which they believed the brand personality associations accurately described the university using a seven-point rating.
scale. To measure self-congruency, respondents were asked the extent to which personality associations similar to the university brand personality associations accurately described him/her as an individual. Scores for each of the 12 self-associations were then compared to the scores for university brand associations. Respondents were then classified into one of four groups based upon the total perceived match between actual-self ratings and university ratings: (1) congruency where 50% or more of the associations were rated the same for the university and self (self-congruent), (2) self-favorable incongruency where 50% or more of the university ratings were lower than self-ratings (self-high), (3) university-favorable incongruency where 50% or more of the university ratings were higher than self-ratings (self-low), and (4) mixed incongruency where no association category – congruent, self-favorable, or university-favorable – was equal to at least 50%, or two categories were equal to 50% (self-mixed).

To measure ideal-congruency, respondents were asked the extent to which individual personality associations paralleling the university brand personality associations accurately described who s/he wants to be as an individual. Scores for each of the 12 ideal-associations were then compared to the scores for the brand associations. Paralleling classifications for self-congruency, respondents were then classified into one of four groups – ideal-congruent, ideal-high, ideal-low, and ideal-mixed – based upon the total perceived match between the ideal-self ratings and university ratings.
Sample. After excluding respondents with missing data, the final sample included 382 undergraduate students enrolled in the main campus of Ohio University. The sample was demographically homogenous; most respondents were American (95.0%), enrolled full-time (98.7%), and between the ages of 18-23 (96.6%). The sample represented two genders (58.5% female) and a variety of class ranks (32.7% sophomore; 34.0% junior; 30.4% senior). Over 75% of respondents self-reported that their grade-point-average was at least 3.0. The majority of respondents had at least some non-academic involvement with the university; 90.0% were members of at least one student organization and 96.9% had voluntarily attended one university-sponsored student activity or event in the previous six months. In comparison with the university’s population demographics, the respondents were generally representative of the undergraduate population.

Results

To test H1, one-way between subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test for mean differences in average attitude toward the ad between four groups: self-congruent ($n = 117$), self-high ($n = 55$), self-low ($n = 132$), and self-mixed ($n = 78$). Results of Levene’s test for homogeneity of variances indicated variances among the groups were equal ($F = 2.076, p < .05$). As such, an $F$ statistic and post-hoc analysis in which equal variances were assumed (Tukey) were used to test the model. Overall, attitude toward the ad did not vary by self-congruency, $F (3, 378) = 2.08, p > .05$. Tukey post hoc procedure indicated an average average attitude toward the ad for the self-congruent group ($M_{Self-Congruent} = 4.62$, $SD_{Self-Congruent} = 1.42$) was not
significantly different than any of the other groups, including the self-high group ($M_{Self-High} = 4.10$, $SD_{Self-High} = 1.34$), the self-mixed group ($M_{Self-Mixed} = 4.29$, $SD_{Self-Mixed} = 1.35$), and the self-low group ($M_{Self-Low} = 4.47$, $SD_{Self-Low} = 1.33$), $p > .05$.

Therefore, H1 is not supported. Descriptive statistics are provided in Table 3.

To test H2, eight simple regression models were used to test the influence of attitude toward the ad on likeliness to recommend (NPS) using the ad. For each of the four self-comparison groups (self-congruent, self-favorable, university-favorable, and mixed) and each of the ideal-comparison groups (ideal-congruent, ideal-favorable, university-favorable, and mixed), the model included the average of seven attitude toward the ad scales as the independent variable, and NPS for the university using the ad as the dependent variable. Of the four self-comparison groups and four ideal-comparison groups examined, all were significant:

- Self-congruent: $F (1,115) = 177.11$, $p < .01$, Adjusted $R^2 = .60$
- Self-high: $F (1, 53) = 56.54$, $p < .01$, Adjusted $R^2 = .51$
- Self-low: $F (1, 130) = 144.80$, $p < .01$, Adjusted $R^2 = .52$
- Self-mixed: $F (1, 76) = 107.52$, $p < .01$, Adjusted $R^2 = .58$
- Ideal-congruent: $F (1, 102) = 215.06$, $p < .01$, Adjusted $R^2 = .68$
- Ideal-high: $F (1, 179) = 163.51$, $p < .01$, Adjusted $R^2 = .47$
- Ideal-low: $F (1, 29) = 21.28$, $p < .01$, Adjusted $R^2 = .40$
- Ideal-mixed: $F (1, 64) = 125.75$, $p < .01$, Adjusted $R^2 = .66$

Therefore, H2 is supported for both self-congruency and ideal-congruency. Regression statistics and Pearson correlation coefficients are provided in Table 4.
To test H3, one-way between subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test for mean differences in attitude toward the ad for each of the three scenarios (generic, buildings, and people) between four groups: self-congruent ($n = 117$), self-high ($n = 55$), self-low ($n = 132$), and self-mixed ($n = 78$). Results of Levene’s test for homogeneity of variances indicated variances among the groups were equal ($F = 4.11, p > .05$). As such, an $F$ statistic and post-hoc analysis in which equal variances were assumed (Tukey) were used to test the model.

Overall, attitude toward the ad for each scenario varied by self-congruency, $F(2, 114) = 23.53, p < .01$. For the self-congruent group, Tukey post hoc procedure indicated average attitude toward the ad for the buildings advertisement ($M_{\text{Buildings}} = 5.52, SD_{\text{Buildings}} = .93$) was significantly higher than the people advertisement ($M_{\text{People}} = 4.69, SD_{\text{People}} = 1.01$), which was also significantly higher than the generic advertisement ($M_{\text{Generic}} = 3.63, SD_{\text{Generic}} = 1.58$), $p < .05$. By comparison, the other groups followed a common yet different pattern. For example, in the self-low group, Tukey post hoc procedure indicated average attitude toward the ad for the buildings advertisement ($M_{\text{Buildings}} = 4.82, SD_{\text{Buildings}} = 1.22$) was not statistically different than the people advertisement ($M_{\text{People}} = 4.77, SD_{\text{People}} = 1.31$), $p < .05$; but both were significantly higher than the generic advertisement ($M_{\text{Generic}} = 3.82, SD_{\text{Generic}} = 1.24$), $p > .05$. Descriptive statistics are provided in Table 5.

**Discussion**

The results of this study suggest that brand personality congruency does not influence consumer attitudes toward an advertisement for the respective brand (H1).
Although one might think that advertisements, in general, could be more effective for self-congruent viewers, the results of this study indicate that personality congruency does not have a significant effect on the average attitude toward the ad. This lack of relationship suggests that, in regard to advertisements, brand personality congruency does not produce a halo effect for consumers. As such, brands should avoid relying on brand personality congruency alone as an alternative to developing effective advertising campaigns.

In contrast, however, H2 was supported by the results. Attitude toward the ad does influence participants' likeliness to recommend the brand using the aforementioned advertisement. The relationship was the strongest among the participants in the self-congruent group, where 60.3% of the variance in NPS was explained by attitude toward the ad, but the relationship was significant among all groups. Among the participant population as a whole, 56.5% of variance in NPS was explained by attitude toward the ad. Although these results were expected, the difference between the brand personality subgroups was not anticipated. More specifically, these results indicate that participants in the self-congruent group are the most likely among the brand personality congruence groups to let their attitude toward a specific advertisement influence their likeliness to recommend the brand using that ad. This insight suggests that the group of participants that are most in-tune with their perceptions of the brand's personality also have a stronger sense of positive or negative cognition toward the advertisements. Essentially, these participants are more likely to critically assess an advertisement, allowing their cognitive and affective
perceptions of the advertisement to influence their behavior slightly more than those who are less in-tune with the brand's personality.

H3 was also supported by the results of the study. As such, the category of advertisement content (general, building, and people) does moderate the relationship between student self-congruency and attitude toward the ad. While attitude toward the advertisement was the lowest, on average, for the generic ad in each of the brand personality participant groups (self-congruent, self-high, self-low, and self-mixed), the only group to show a significant difference in average attitude toward the ad for the buildings and people advertisements was the self-congruent group. Interestingly, participants categorized as self-congruent favored the ad featuring university buildings to the ad featuring students and other people associated with the institution, which may be explained by the university image. Ohio University has very distinct architecture, with some buildings dating back to the early 1800s. Since that time, university expansions and buildings have been designed to include similar architectural aspects and building materials. For example, many of the university's main campus buildings feature brick exteriors, arched doorways and/or windows, exterior pillars, and exterior monumental stairs. In addition to the cohesive university architectural identity, Ohio University's academic logo is an image of Cutler Hall, which references the institution's signature style. Extant research around place and icon branding may further explain why self-congruent individuals are more likely to score advertisements featuring university buildings higher than those featuring unidentifiable people. For example, Kirby and Kent (2010) suggest that historic
buildings can be distinctive landmarks of a place, and also appeal to the local surroundings. As such, this finding suggests that brand icons, represented by buildings in this study, can have more of an influence over self-congruent individuals than unidentifiable people in advertisements.

These results may be unique to Ohio University, but it could be argued that what this study actually found was an instance depicting the power of iconic brand features in advertising. Arguably, Ohio University's buildings are prominent iconic features of the institution's overall brand. If this study actually compared the power of brand icons and people/personal experiences in advertising, it could be argued that while both are significantly more powerful than generic ad content, iconic brand features elicit the strongest positive reaction from consumers who are heavily in-tune with the brand, as determined by brand personality self-congruency.

**Conclusion: Branding, Congruency, and Attitude toward the Ad**

In conclusion, the second study explored the relationship between students’ perceptions of brand personality associations and two types of person-brand personality congruence on students’ attitude toward advertisement content and net promoter score using a specific university context. The results found that while brand personality congruency does not influence attitude toward an advertisement in general, attitude toward an advertisement does influence consumer intentions (NPS). Additionally, the relationship between advertisement content and attitude toward the ad is moderated by personality congruency. Combined, the results suggest that students who either believe the university’s brand personality matches who they are or
who they want to be are most likely to be promoters of the university to others when they have positive attitudes toward advertisements that utilize content featuring iconic branding elements.

**Limitations and Future Research**

As with any body of research, this research has distinct limitations. First, the studies measured WOM intentions rather than actual WOM behavior. Future research should consider measuring actual WOM behavior if possible. Second, the studies deliberately focused on student perceptions of brand personality, self-congruency, and ideal-congruency. However, these variables represent only part of a more complex model of consumer attitudes and behaviors that may also include brand loyalty, organization identification, student satisfaction, and reputation. Future research should investigate potential relationships among other variables. Third, the studies used a case analysis approach by collecting data from a single university. Future research may draw samples from other universities to better understand how self-identified brand personality associations influence NPS in different cultural contexts. Fourth, the studies did not explore the antecedents of perceptions of brand personality associations. Future research should consider how university’s use of brand markers and branding messages influence brand personality associations. Fifth, the second study analyzed the effects of personality congruency and attitude toward the advertisement on students’ likeliness to recommend the university. Future research should examine the relationships between these variables in different consumer
contexts to further develop an understanding about how personality congruency influences consumer perceptions and intentions.
### Table 1: Regression Statistics for Brand Personality Characteristics on Net Promoter Score (NPS)

*Adjusted $R^2 = .338$*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand Personality</th>
<th>Standardized $\beta$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accessible</td>
<td>.066</td>
<td>1.070</td>
<td>.374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authentic</td>
<td>.059</td>
<td>0.972</td>
<td>.361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>0.358</td>
<td>.432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative</td>
<td>-.083</td>
<td>-1.226</td>
<td>.343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diverse</td>
<td>.036</td>
<td>0.598</td>
<td>.323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enriching</td>
<td>.196</td>
<td>2.622**</td>
<td>.514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>0.101</td>
<td>.381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualistic</td>
<td>-.043</td>
<td>-0.689</td>
<td>.299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovative</td>
<td>.155</td>
<td>2.177*</td>
<td>.472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student-Centered</td>
<td>.132</td>
<td>2.071*</td>
<td>.420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic</td>
<td>.096</td>
<td>1.687</td>
<td>.324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligent</td>
<td>.156</td>
<td>2.294*</td>
<td>.481</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$*
Table 2: Net Promoter Score (NPS) Descriptive Statistics as a Function of Self-Congruency and Ideal-Congruency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Congruency Groups</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Actual Self</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Congruent</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>9.33</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>82.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-High</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>7.95</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>48.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Low</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>9.23</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>80.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Mixed</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>8.50</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>57.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ideal Self</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideal-Congruent</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>9.50</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>77.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideal-High</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>8.18</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>52.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideal-Mixed</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>8.93</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>69.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* The maximum NPS score is 10.
Table 3: Attitude toward the Ad Descriptive Statistics as a Function of Self-Congruency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Congruency Groups</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actual Self</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Congruent</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>4.617</td>
<td>1.420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-High</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>4.104</td>
<td>1.337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Low</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>4.465</td>
<td>1.332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Mixed</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>4.291</td>
<td>1.347</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: The maximum Attitude toward the Ad score is 7.*
Table 4: Regression Statistics for Attitude toward the Ad on Net Promoter Score (NPS) by Comparison Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparison Group</th>
<th>Adjusted R²</th>
<th>Standardized β</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-Congruent</td>
<td>.603</td>
<td>.779</td>
<td>13.308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-High</td>
<td>.507</td>
<td>.718</td>
<td>7.519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Low</td>
<td>.523</td>
<td>.726</td>
<td>12.033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Mixed</td>
<td>.580</td>
<td>.765</td>
<td>10.369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideal-Congruent</td>
<td>.675</td>
<td>.824</td>
<td>14.665</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideal-High</td>
<td>.474</td>
<td>.691</td>
<td>12.787</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideal-Low</td>
<td>.403</td>
<td>.651</td>
<td>4.613</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ideal-Mixed</td>
<td>.657</td>
<td>.814</td>
<td>11.214</td>
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</table>

*Note: all regressions were significant (p < .01)*
Table 5: Attitude toward the Ad as a function of Advertisement Content, as moderated by Self-Congruency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Congruency Groups</th>
<th>Attitude Toward the Ad (Aad)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Congruent</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generic Content</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buildings Content</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People Content</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-High</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generic Content</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buildings Content</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People Content</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Low</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generic Content</td>
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<td>Buildings Content</td>
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<tr>
<td>People Content</td>
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<td><strong>Self-Mixed</strong></td>
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<td>Buildings Content</td>
<td>26</td>
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<tr>
<td>People Content</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* The maximum Aad score is 7.
References


Babin, L., & Burns, A. C. (1997). Effects of print ad pictures and copy containing instructions to imagine on mental imagery that mediates attitudes. *Journal of Advertising, 26*(Fall), 33-44.


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