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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

#### “UNDERSTANDING BRANDS”- IN A HUMAN WAY.

**Dr. Shashikala Patil<sup>1</sup> and Mr. Govindan J M<sup>2</sup>.**

1. Assistant Professor, Symbiosis School of Media & Communication, # 95/1, 95/2, Electronic City Phase I, Hosur Road, Bengaluru-560 100
2. Assistant Manager, Marketing Communications at Hyatt

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#### Abstract

Products and Brands are considered as the two faces of a same coin. These are the things which we come across in our day to day life. Both of them exist with their identities complementing or even supporting each other. This article begins by giving life to products and brands, metaphorically comparing it to Human Beings. Then we differentiate products and brands to understand them better, followed by finding the needs that they would have, the expectations from the customers or even the consumers.

This paper outlines the intricate relationship and supports a statistical study with the perception that people have towards brands and products and also the hegemony it has created in the minds of consumers. We have tried to bring in the perspective of a brand, trying to speak from its shoes. This paper brings forward the opinion that the Brand has put forward. The Brand speaks for itself.

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#### Introduction:-

Two things explain the aspects of product and a brand, one being the form and the other being the name. The distinct quality of a human being can be figuratively used to understand a brand with that of a product. While all human beings are made out of flesh and bones but what makes one unique and stand out from rest of the crowd is their name that we associate one to, the achievements and the laurels.

A product is nothing but flesh and bones that has a working nature. It is an article, a substance, a thing. In simpler terms it can be used and utilized to minimize or accomplish our efforts. It is a body that is made of flesh and bones that can run, jump, dance, hop and what not. A brand is a name, term, design or other feature that distinguishes one seller's product from those of others. This is one reason that all the innate traits of a product are reflected from that of a brand. The components of Body and Mind of Human Beings are reflected in products and brand respectively.

Thus, a brand exists amidst us by the name, while the product glorifies its form. In simpler terms, we can touch a product while what we can feel is a brand.

We speak a ton about it; laud it for its esteem, but we are a prey to it. Brand manikins us like a puppeteer with the strings of reinforcements like promotions, advertisements, offers etc. We might be aware but we keep revering it.

**Corresponding Author:- Dr. Shashikala Patil.**

Address:- Assistant Professor, Symbiosis School of Media & Communication, # 95/1, 95/2, Electronic City Phase I, Hosur Road, Bengaluru-560 100.

While products can be tangible or intangible like services, brands overpower the products, reflect the products and bring them to spotlight.

### Literature Review:-

This particular research paper studies the brands and products in the human way. Here we unravel the relationship between the brands and humans. We also bring forward the role of brands and its influence on human personality.

As we know, brands are built through customers experience and not just through advertising. Most of the time, it is established and proved that consumers prefer brands which suits their personalities. In the sense, brand personality is conceptualized as brands possessing human like traits. This dynamic conceptualization rests upon the matching of brand characteristics and behavioral traits of the consumers.

A brand is the unified symbol that gives meaning to all the products and services it sells. These are the most important asset in any business. It is an accrual of poignant and functional associations. It is a promise that the product will accomplish and shapes customer's expectations about the product. Brands usually have a trademark which protects them from use by others. It gives particular information about the organization, goods or service which distinguishes it from other in the market. Brand carries an assurance about the distinctiveness that makes the product or service unique. A strong brand is a means of making people aware of what the company represents and what its offerings are.

When we shop for a certain product isn't it the brand that matters. We create a hegemony flaunting the brand all the time. That is because a brand portrays things beyond the utility of a product. Consumers are not only functionally oriented. Rather, the emotional (Thompson, Rindfleisch, & Arsel, 2006) and symbolic meanings of brands also influence consumption. It's a lifestyle. It's another being... "A brand for a company is like a reputation for a person. You earn reputation by trying to do hard things well."— Jeff Bezos

### Feature of Differentiation for Products and Brands:-

Features	Product	Brand
Perceives	Company makes Products	Customers make Brands
Quality	External Traits	Innate and Internal traits
Lie	They are in shelves, cupboards or Garage etc. Some are intangible too	They linger and wander in the minds of consumers
Lifetime	They can become obsolete	They continue to exist even after the product's death
Which is first?	Products take birth first	Brands take time to get into customers mind
The X Factor	They can be manufactured by competitors too	Nothing can come close to it, brand is always unique

The big question that immediately strikes is, why do we need brands? The answer is quite simple. Have we ever thought why we need names, birth certificates, an identification number etc., or any other reference material? The reason for the name is the differentiation.

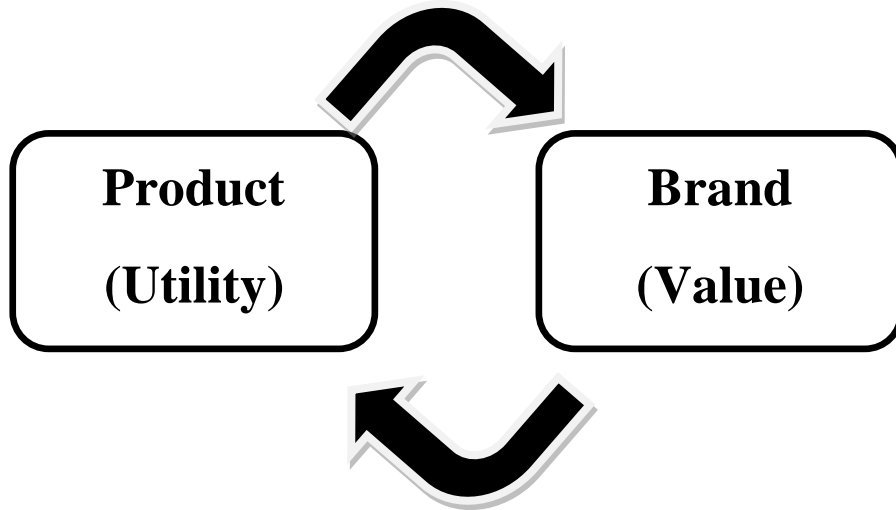
### Brand is the key to differentiation:-

It's like standing out of the crowd and shouting our name aloud. The name too is more than just an identity of differentiation. Emotions are attached to names too. Hearing names of individuals can make people enlightened and enlivened. It can likewise terrify them too because the personality is automatically perceived through a name. The best example could be the name Obama when compared to that of Osama.

Now, when we come to a brand, it is more than just a name, for it's a value that is added. Values are the binding forces that decide the perception. The relative and comparative forces are associated with values. Like being good, bad, friendly etc.

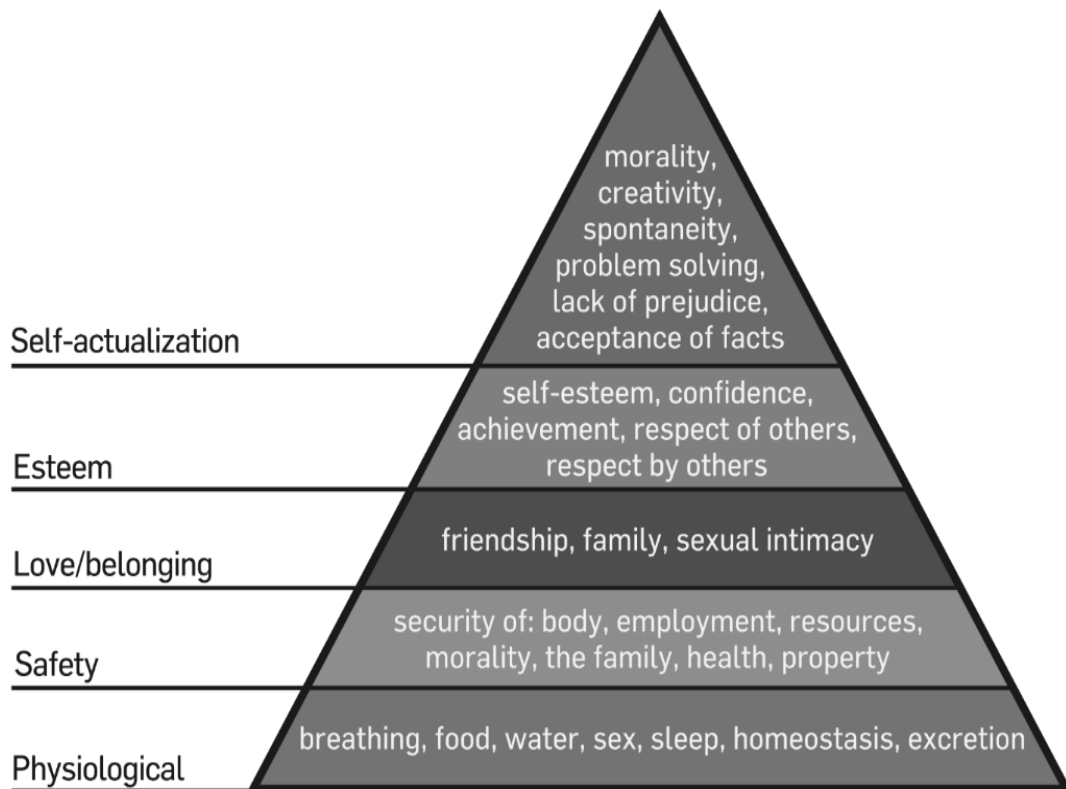
Now when we are humanizing brands, it is also important to contrast the needs that humans want, with that of what brands need.

Figure 1:- Product and Brand.

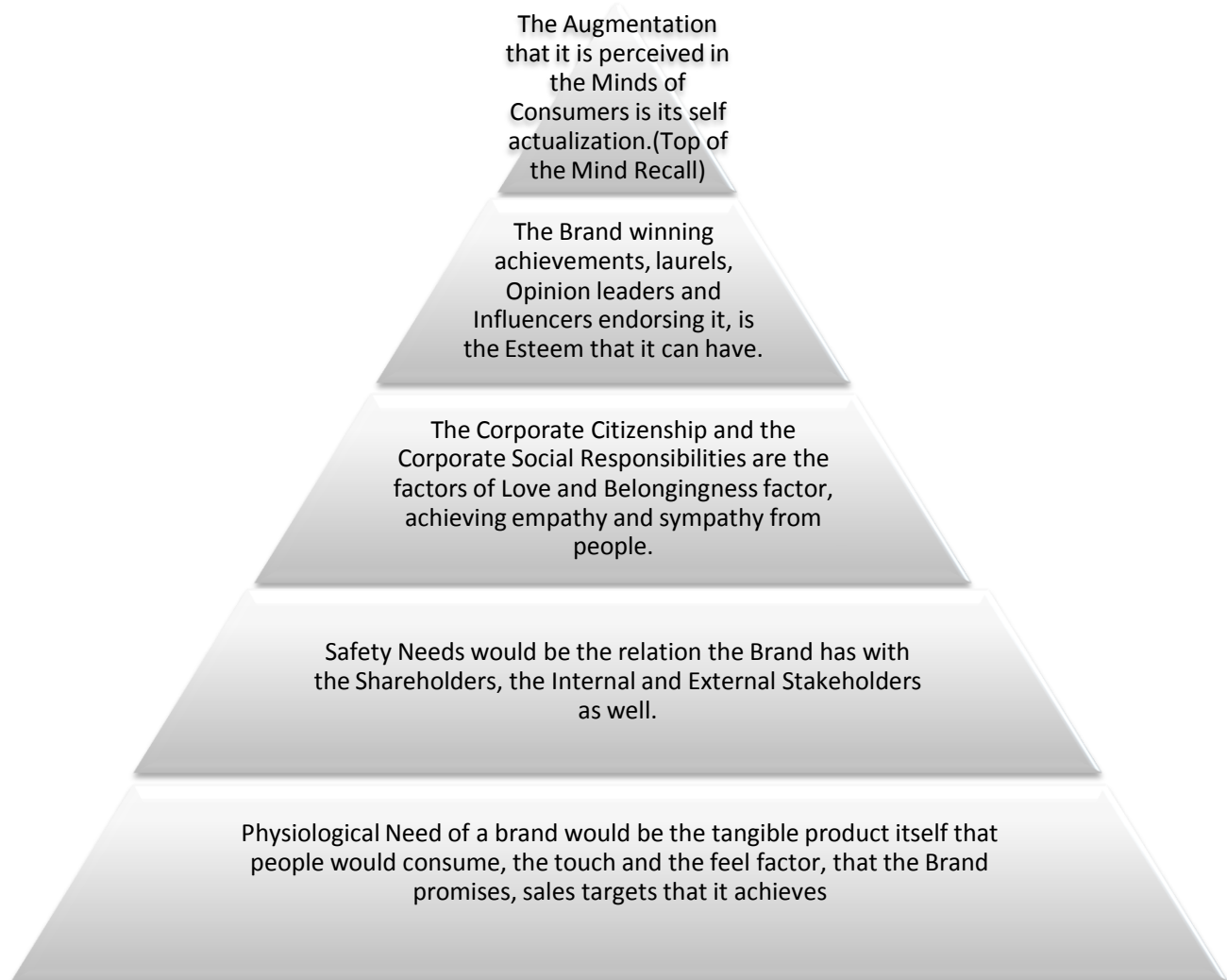


The concept of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Human Needs can be used to understand Brand Needs.

Figure 2:- Maslow’s Hierarchy of Human Needs can be classified thus.



**Figure 3:-** The “Brand Needs”, taking reference from Maslow’s Hierarchy of Human Needs.



Hence brand too is a person, existing amidst of us. It too is born, sometimes dies and we too remember it like our kith and kin, which was once amidst of us but now it is no more. We remember the beautiful association and the experience we derived from it. We share about it with rest of them who only dream or dreamt about it or read in case studies which are discussed in Business schools. If it was a person, then the person would be in books of history. But, brand lies more in case studies and management books. Just like a company hence brand too is proven to be an individual, as in the Solomon vs Solomon case. But a brand is also more than just a person. It's a personality.

#### **The personality traits of a brand...**

Advertisers and marketing practitioners have been the first ones to coin the term brand personality. “People choose their brands the same way they choose their friends in addition to the skills and physical characteristics; they simply like them as people”(King, 1970). Aaker (1991, 1996) proposes that brand associations are anything linked in memory to a brand. In recent years, there has been increased interest in the brand personality construct as its strategic importance has become more perceptible. Brand personality is defined as “the set of human characteristics associated with a brand” (Aaker, 1997). A distinctive brand personality can help create a set of unique and favorable associations in consumer memory and thus build and enhance brand equity (Keller, 1993; Johnson et al., 2000; Phau and Lau, 2000).

Indeed we can say brand personality is a set of human characteristics that are endorsed to a brand name. A brand personality is something to which the consumer can relate, and an effective brand will increase its brand equity by

having a consistent set of traits. This describes and concentrates on center or core qualities and attributes of a brand with accentuation on human identity. A powerful brand will expand its image value by having a predictable arrangement of characteristics. This is the added-value that a brand gains, aside from its functional benefits. There are five main types of brand personalities:

- Fervour: cheerful, vivacious, young, energetic
- Earnestness: authentic, kind, family-situated, mindful, truthful
- Roughness: harsh, intense, outside, athletic, toughness
- Capability: fruitful, fulfilled, persuasive, a pioneer
- Complexity: rich, prestigious, pompous

As a result, brand personality is considered to be an important factor for the success of a brand in terms of preference and choice (Batra et al., 1993; Biel, 1993). Indeed, a well-established brand personality can result in consumers having stronger emotional ties to the brand and greater trust and loyalty (Siguaw et al., 1999; Johnson et al., 2000), thus providing an enduring basis for differentiation, which is difficult to copy (Aaker and Fournier, 1995; Halliday, 1996; Haigood, 1999). From a managerial perspective, brand personality enables firms to communicate with their customers about the brand more effectively and plays a major role in advertising and promotional efforts (Plummer, 1985; Batra et al., 1993; Aaker, 1996). As such, marketing practitioners have become progressively more aware of the importance of building “a clear and distinctive brand personality” (Yaverbaum, 2001, p.20.)

### **The Statistical Study:-**

#### **Purpose of Study:-**

A brand has an identity, just like a name, a number that is associated with humans. In this paper, we compare and contrast the brands in association with products; like minds being associated with the human body respectively.

#### **Design/ Methodology/ Approach:-**

The study used is exploratory with no particular reference to any existing brand or product whatsoever. Theories on Human mind set, psychology are applied to brands. The perspective used here is from the Brands' point of view, from the shoes of the Brand. Eg. The Hierarchy of Needs theory being applicable to a person called “Brand”.

#### **Findings:-**

Here the Human tendencies, feelings of association with the Brand are showcased. The paper tends to prove that (Mind: Body) is as (Brand: Product). In order to do this, certain theories, aspects of differentiation, feelings, and emotions are used to substantiate the statement.

#### **Practical Implications of the Study:-**

In today's competitive market, products don't just exist by the name of their usage. A new name, a new identity takes the implicit and innate characteristics of the product. In short, it is the Brand that rules. Its existence is found not just in the world or the market but in the minds of the customers. Hence, we need to understand it the Human Way.

#### **Originality/ Value:-**

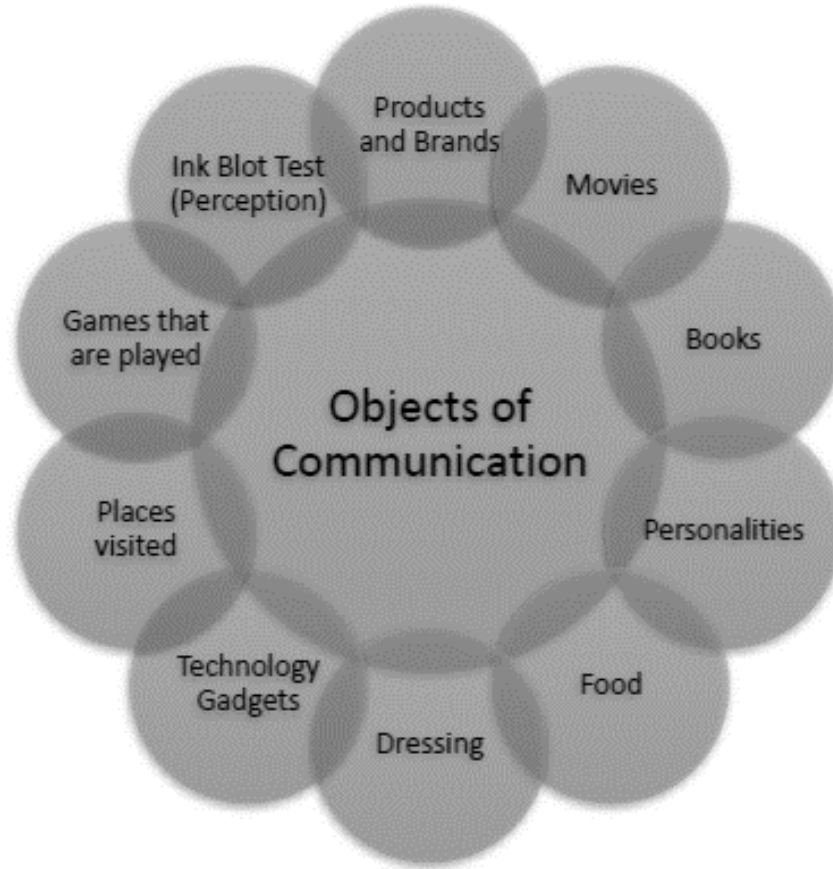
With proper citation and due respect to existing theories, this paper extends one's understanding from using the theories just to Human Beings, taking it further and applying them over the personality called, “Brand”.

#### **Research Methodology:-**

A Simple test, putting across the data on a Standard Normal Variable was done to find the relationship between Brand Name and Brand Identity. Where in, the Brand name ideally what person call is the product as and Brand Identity is the Innate and Inner qualities that the brand possesses.

#### **Questionnaire:-**

A Questionnaire was floated amidst the audience of various age groups. The questions were pertaining to the products they use in their day today's life and various other objects that communicate Brands, names, personality, feelings and emotional attachments.



**Data Analysis:-**

The Questionnaire with 10 questions which have a close ended questions, options to tick categorized people into 4 kinds. They are

- People who say that Brand is not a person
- Brand is a person
- Brand is a personality
- Brand is a personality existing with us and affecting us in every way

**Sample:-**

Based on the interpretation of every individual on the questions asked, the highest score among the 4 options are chosen and each individual is categorized into that particular category.

The total number of respondents has been 152.

Based on their options that they have chosen they have been categorized as follows:

The Classification	The Percentage Received from the Options
One who say that Brand is not a person	15.3%
Brand is a person	17.76%
Brand is a personality	63.157%
Brand is a personality existing with us and affecting us in every way	3.9%

The Mean of the Data rests with “Brand Seen as a Personality”

**Reliability, Validity Analysis and Limitations:-**

The Parameters chosen in the study are limited. There is really a subtle difference between options that are given. Driving an entire mindset requires more conditions and variables that affect Human/ Consumer Behavior.

**The Directions for Future Research:-**

The result is seen that brand is a personality living amidst us, the touch and feel factor is the product while the innate or inner qualities are derived by using the product, which is totally relative and experiential from person to person.

**Conclusion:-**

From this paper, we brought out the aspect that the customers idea towards a brand and the other way round where the brand depends on factors accentuated by the customers. We also found that the brand too has some needs or desires in order to exist.

The personality that the brand accentuates actually defines the identity, positioning and the values that the product carries. Hence, the subtle differences between the mind and the body of a human being can be compared and contrasted with a brand and a product respectively. It's indeed rhetorical whether brands carry products or products carry brands. But nevertheless they carry each other.

This exploratory study demonstrates the fact that consumer/ humans aspires to be associated with what the brand resembles and always tries to utilize brands in different ways to construct the self. For humans, brands can be symbolic, iconic or it can be indexical. To promote brands, marketers must recognize, distinguish and communicate the experiential meaning that brands have. Thus, this characterization will help consumers connect themselves with the brand of their choice. Indeed the Brand speaks for itself.

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