

Editorial Note

Research dialogue introduction

Brands have long been a central focus of research in Consumer Psychology. A great deal of research has explored how brands are perceived in human terms (e.g., Aaker, 1997), and indeed, how individuals come to develop relationships with brands (Fournier, 1998). This notion that consumers have relationships with brands has generated a great deal of recent research (e.g., MacInnis, Park, & Priester, 2009; Park, MacInnis, Priester, Eisingerich, & Iacobucci, 2010). The current Research Dialogue builds upon the consumer–brand relationship literature.

The target paper for this Research Dialogue integrates theory from social perception with the consumer–brand relationship literature. Specifically, Nicolas Kervyn, Susan Fiske, and Chris Malone (2012–this issue) explore how the Stereotype Content Model can be applied to how individuals perceive brands. The Stereotype Content Model holds that individuals perceive groups largely in terms of their Warmth and Competence. In their target paper, they apply this perspective to brands, developing their Brands as Intentional Agents Framework. Their paper argues that individuals perceive brands along the same dimensions by which they perceive groups, and that specific perceptions drive emotional responses, brand loyalty, and brand intentions.

Five noted sets of authors provide the comments on the target paper. Jennifer Aaker, Emily Garbinsky, and Kathleen Vohs (2012–this issue) explore in detail when brands are perceived as both competent and warm (the “golden quadrant”). They find that important benefits flow from such perception. Kevin Keller (2012–this issue) suggests that additional dimension (e.g., expertise, trust, and likeability) was also used by consumer to understand brands. In addition, he advances the notion that an important additional outcome of such perceptions is “brand resonance” — an intense and active loyal relationship. Susan Fournier and Claudio Alvarez (2012–this issue) endorse an interdisciplinary approach to exploring consumer-brand relationships, and propose additional avenues of exploration, including the process by which brands come to be seen as intentional agents, consumers as relationship agents, additional consumer-brand relationship dimensions, and the dynamics underlying the warmth — competency judgments. Deborah MacInnis (2012–this issue) explores conceptual questions arising from the target paper, and advances possible avenues for future research. Aronté Marie Bennett and Ron Hill (2012–this issue) investigate how demographic difference, such as importance of age, education, and

income, influences the extent to which individuals do perceive brands according to warmth and competency. Fiske, Malone, and Kervyn (2012–this issue) provide a response to the commentaries. This Research Dialogue provides an important conceptual advance in understanding consumers’ psychological relationship to brands.

References

- Aaker, J. L. (1997). Dimensions of brand personality. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 34(3), 347–356.
- Aaker, Jennifer L., Garbinsky, Emily N., & Vohs, Kathleen D. (2012). Cultivating Admiration in Brands: Warmth, Competence, and Landing in the “Golden Quadrant”. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 22(2), 191–194 (this issue).
- Bennett, Aronté M., & Hill, Ronald P. (2012). The Universality of Warmth and Competence: A Response to Brands as Intentional Agents. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 22(2), 199–204 (this issue).
- Fiske, Susan T., Malone, Chris, & Kervyn, Nicolas (2012). Brands as Intentional Agents: Our Response to Commentaries”. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 22(2), 205–207 (this issue).
- Fournier, S. (1998). Consumers and their brands: Developing relationship theory in consumer research. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 24, 343–373 [March].
- Fournier, Susan, & Alvarez, Claudio (2012). Brands as Relationship Partners: Warmth, Competence, and In-Between. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 22(2), 177–185 (this issue).
- Keller, Kevin L. (2012). Understanding the Richness of Brand Relationships: Research Dialogue on Brands as Intentional Agents. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 22(2), 186–190 (this issue).
- Kervyn, Nicolas, Fiske, Susan T., & Malone, Chris (2012). Brands as Intentional Agents Framework: How Perceived Intentions and Ability Can Map Brand Perception. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 22(2), 166–176 (this issue).
- MacInnis, Deborah J. (2012). Brands as Intentional Agents: Questions and Extensions. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 22(2), 195–198 (this issue).
- MacInnis, Deborah J., Park, C. Whan, & Priester, Joseph R. (2009). *Handbook of Brand Relationships*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.
- Park, C. W., MacInnis, D. J., Priester, J., Eisingerich, A., & Iacobucci, D. (2010). Brand attachment and brand attitude strength: Conceptual and empirical differentiation of two critical brand equity drivers. *Journal of Marketing*, 74(6), 1–17.

Joseph R. Priester  
University of Southern California, USA

Richard E. Petty  
The Ohio State University, USA