

Conceptualizing Self-Concept and Brand Image Congruity Relating with Shopping Behavior

Aland S. Abdulla^{1*}, Dr. Uma Shankar Singh¹

¹Faculty of Administrative Sciences and Economics Tishk International University Erbil, Kurdistan, Iraq

DOI: [10.36348/sjbms.2021.v06i06.003](https://doi.org/10.36348/sjbms.2021.v06i06.003)

| Received: 04.05.2021 | Accepted: 10.06.2021 | Published: 15.06.2021

*Corresponding author: Aland S. Abdulla

Abstract

Research conducted here is conceptualizing the theme of self-concept and brand image with the concept of their congruity and the effect of self-concept, brand image and self-concept/brand image congruity on shopping behavior. Current study is the sub part of the broad research conducted with dimension exploration. First phase of this research was aimed to develop concept with relevant literature support with the justification of definition and existing literature on related concept. Research is mainly concerned with checking the similarity of self-concept and brand image of consumers in Kurdistan (Iraq) with respect to "NIKE" brand products. Now days brand has been a very important aspect of life, even some products are getting recognized only because of the brand. Companies are struggling to establish their brand and consumers are fast mover switching over brand to brand. One's self-concept can serve as a driving force in shaping attitude and behavior. Brand image gets buildup on a long duration of time, where the company is committed to work on quality and fulfilling market need and demand. Brand image can get seen as the interaction of the consumer in each and every aspect of the business formed with the common understanding of many consumers. Self-concept is an individual's own understanding about self which get shaped with time on one's own experiences. Self-concept and brand image congruity is defined as similarity in between an individual understanding of him/ herself with the image of the brand the individual is carrying in the mind. Self-concept and brand image congruity concept is one of its kind, where it is very important to understand the acceptance of a brand by a shopper depends upon his/ her own similarity with the brand.

Key words: Self, self-concept, brand, brand image, shopping, shopping behavior, congruity.

Copyright © 2021 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.

INTRODUCTION

Centuries passed in the process of human race development, since beginning it was having the consumptive nature. In the process of human development, it has passed through different ages, people were not aware of business and marketing what we discussed today. Though the concept was always there but not explored so massively. With the development of time and the process of industrialization and developing consumerism have become the stimuli for different conceptual developments. We are living in the era of developments in all aspects of life academically, socially, technologically and intellectually. It is very difficult to say where this will take to the society but the development has a rapid way and changing very swiftly (Saran, Roy, and Sethuraman 2016). Since beginning individuals possess their own

concepts about themselves "How they look? What is their identity?" accordingly they consume a brand. A consumer consumes a brand or a buyer buys a brand looking at them, what will suit to him or her. Now days brand has been a very important aspect of life, even some products are getting recognized only because of the brand by Sherwani and Singh, (2015). Companies are struggling to establish their brand and consumers are fast mover switching over brand to brand. Here it gets very important for companies to understand their customer and get their brand matching to consumer's self-concept (Islam, Rahman, and Hollebeek 2018). Congruity effect plays very important role in understanding of similarity of brand image and the buyer's market self-concept. Shopping behavior is the behavioral aspect of an individual varies person to person. Still understanding and segmenting the shoppers market in a categorized grouping can help the business

entity to have a better market and the brand establishment.

Current study in this research aims to explore the importance of self-concept, brand image and their congruity can have an impact on shopping behavior. The similarity of self-concept and brand image dimensions brings a strong desire for the consumer to consume a product or a service. Research is mainly concerned with checking the similarity of self-concept and brand image of consumers in Kurdistan (Iraq) and London (United Kingdom), with respect to "NIKE" brand products. Furthermore the evaluation on checking the shaping of shopping behavior with the impact self-concept and brand (Bosnjak and Rudolph 2008). Study has an extensive understanding about the conceptual framework and the conceptual model proposed for justification of the theoretical understanding. Brand selection for the study has been the concern to get a better understanding and the benefit to academic and industrial fraternity. NIKE has been a successful brand for years, but with the changing time shoppers are switching from this brand is easily observed. London has been the NIKE brand store hub exploded with NIKE brand full product range. Kurdish shoppers were inclined towards the NIKE brand but now it is shifting. Triggering point is still poking here, what is making shoppers to switch over the brand? Study is relevant with the geographic scope of Kurdistan (Singh and Bradosti, 2015) having the brand conscious consumers and accessibility of respondents for responses.

Self-Concept and Shopping

One's self-concept can serve as a driving force in shaping attitude and behavior. Understanding of the shopping behavior has been a very important aspect for marketers with the changing time and challenges with companies to establish their brand and products in the eyes of customers for the business establishment. After launching of product, it must reach to consumer's door where it can get used. Shoppers buy the product based on their own understanding of self (Dortyol, Coskun, and Kitapci 2018). They look at themselves and compare the brand with their own self-concept. Understanding shopping behavior is crucial for the establishing the better market. The product goes in different ways, can be acquisition, consumption, and disposition. But in any case shopping is the most important (Goldsmith, Moore, and Beaudoin 1999). Different aspects of shopping cannot get denied but the most important is the consumer need, if the product is solving consumer's problem, for sure it will get shopped.

Shopping has different trends, all products does not get bought all the time, so the understanding of how, what, when, where and from whom the product gets bought is another area of research. Though most studies believe that self-concept is one of the important concept in the consumption process (Heath and Scott

1998). The concept of "self" is explained differently by many researchers, where a number of theories exist talking about self-concept. Avison and Rosenberg (1981) define "the totality of the individual's thoughts and feelings having reference to himself as an object" is very well accepted definition. It can get said that an individual's self-concept is shaped by the perception and responses generated by others. Self-concept has been proposed as a cognitive structure having an association with feelings and behavior (Heath and Scott 1998). Social Interactions shape one's idea of self, based on the reflection of others attitude toward ourselves during the interaction process. It is mostly the "reflexive evaluation" where others understanding of an individual gets shaped in individuals thought process, leads to believing the same as others perceptions. An Individual does shopping based on the perception of self and looks for the fitting category with the self-concept.

Brand Image Importance

Identity is the most important dimension for any object to get recognized. It is an identity term but it is not simple only a logo having the identification for a business, a specific product or a service (Hofmann et al. 2019). Brand image gets buildup on a long duration of time, where the company is committed to work on quality and fulfilling market need and demand. Brand image can get seen as the interaction of the consumer in each and every aspect of the business formed with the common understanding of many consumers. Early days most of the entrepreneurs and the business houses were not much concerned about the brand or brand building process and the importance of a specific brand. With the development of business and rivalry among players in the industry enforced the company for establishing the brand (Gendel-Guterman and Levy 2018). Brand plays a very important role in establishment of a business. Now brand image has been an important concern to keep the business sustainable and being in the pace for years. Brand image is an asset for the business which keeps accumulating and keeps business developing.

Business offerings are important, but offering a good brand image is the same important. Products sold with a very high brand image gets more acceptance in the market and helps the company to grow faster. Brand image is an impression; we know the first impression makes or breaks the business. In the beginning itself a good brand image leads the business to a better success and attract shoppers easily and frequently by Bradosti and Singh, (2015). A good impression has so many factors like product quality, service delivery, customer's interaction, store ambiance, website design, business cards presentation and more (Gaustad *et al.* 2019). It is not superficial but it contributes to build a strong brand that keeps a longer impact in potential customers mind. Easy recognition of the brand can get by having a strong brand image. There are so many examples like Apple device and Coca-Cola

which gets recognized because of their logo or slogan. It gives an identity for a brand for an easy recognition. Consumers find themselves more connected to brands, looking at the logo or slogan which is close to their understanding. Though again, it is not only the logo or slogan but much beyond that having visual elements and brand associations (Boronczyk and Breuer 2019)). It is very difficult to establish a strong relationship with a customer but having a strong brand image it creates a strong association. A strong brand image makes a specific customer segment for itself, which helps the business to protect its market share. A professional approach from the business has a contribution in the brand building exercise which leads to have credibility, equity and loyalty. Positioning of brand image is completely in the hand of the business where it decides what to put, where to put, and how to communicate? Everyday interactions with costumers makes them buy the brand and establishes an image in their mind (Grace, Ross, and King 2020). When a customer buys a product, he/she is not buying the product only, but buying the brand stands for and can deliver.

Changing Shopping Behavior

Change is one of the most vital phenomena worldwide with everything and everywhere. The same has been here with the shopping behavior as well. Advancement in the information and communication technology has been the contributor in shaping the thought process of individuals (Patel and Shukla 2016). Digital evolution and the cloud-based platforms have given additional facilities for better understanding of happenings around. Shoppers have more ways now compared to earlier times reaching their shopping destination and the brand choices. Shoppers shopping decision has been multitude to navigate the requirements by Sahin and Singh, (2017). Social sites are also behaving as tools providing with opinions in choosing the best option. Companies are in war for sharing their information to convert shoppers towards them. Marketers are competing with each other virtually to get acceptance by shoppers and to persuade them for their products and services. Information has been the power and online platforms has been the tool for the business (Driediger and Bhatiasevi 2019). Shoppers also finding it easy to go on the web, get the information and buy online. There is a lack of physical connectivity that has impacted a lot and have changed the shopper behavior. Shopping behavior is changing; still shopper needs to feel the need for a product or service. Need leads the to the search for information then the selection of the right choice, shopping decision, shopping implementation and the thought on post shopping evaluation.

In reality what has changed, which is making shoppers to act differently. The dominance of digital media digital platforms immensely effecting the cross communication, information gathering and sharing, and the easy platform to shop. Shoppers are not being

through the exact shopping process which was in the traditional approach. Now shopping is multidimensional rather the one-dimensional in the traditional shopping, where the shopper was going through a systematic process in one direction by Singh and Mishra, (2015). Brands were having the power and control during the past years but with the boom of digital era, brands are losing control on information. Shoppers are having more options and sources to shop in the open access of internet. Digital technology development has strengthened shopper's control and ownership behavior for the selection of a specific brand. Traditional shopping was more challenging, where shopper was forced to roam around "going all over the place," back and forth and back again. On the platform of digital shopping, shoppers save their time and money which is a huge advantage today. Shopper markets need to plan well and to establish the platform which can get used as the access point for shoppers, which can hold the shopper to have a specific brand selection for a product (Maraz *et al.* 2015). Changing shopping behavior has accelerated the purchase process, shoppers find it convenient and cheaper saving their time and resources. The reason behind this is the accessibility to more information, more opinion, quick responses, wider knowledge base, deeper understanding of the brand and e-payment system. Most of the interactions today happening online, shoppers are virtually connected and meeting at one point which has a lot of sharing and pushing shoppers for changing their approach for shopping.

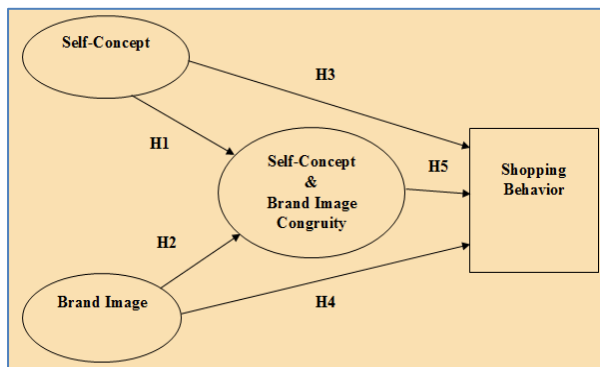
Congruity Self-Concept and Brand Image

Self-concept is an individual's own understanding about self which get shaped with time on one's own experiences. Researchers explain brand image as the image manifested in understanding of a consumer (Saran *et al.* 2016). Self-concept and brand image congruity is defined as similarity in between an individual understanding of him/ herself with the image of the brand the individual is carrying in the mind. Self-concept and brand image congruity concept is one of its kind, where it is very important to understand the acceptance of a brand by a shopper depends upon his/her own similarity with the brand (Abel, Buff, and O'Neill 2013). Brands can get accepted or rejected based on image formed in consumer's mind. In this study, it is very important to understand the congruity concept which makes a brand sustain with its target market. Every market has its own characteristics, its own preferences, its own acceptances and its own rejections. At the situation of this complexity, a brand must understand its target market and characteristics of this market. Based on understanding, marketer can set up its brand strategy that can get fixed with its target group of buyers. Over decades research in the area of self-concept has explored many congruent dimensions like brand attitude, purchase intention and brand preferences (Jeong and Jang 2018). Some of study has concentrated on self-concept and brand image congruity

which shows that, the congruity concept is the key for the acceptance of the brand among shoppers. Brand preference comes by an individual feeling that the brand is matching with individual's self-understanding.

Self-concept and product image congruity was tested first time (Birdwell 1968), where the study was based on usage of automobiles by individuals and tested his/her self-concept with his/ her car and concluded that the congruity is very important role player in consumption process. Another research by Jamal and Goode (2001) conducted for the Jewelry brand concluded that brand preference is based upon the individual congruity with the brand. Study emphasized on the congruity concept as a very strong predictor for the product preference of consumer. A high level of self-concept and brand image congruity leads to higher level satisfaction, another way a lower level of self-concept and brand image congruity leads to lower level of satisfaction (Hu *et al.* 2012). Many of the research conducted in different areas including apparel and sports industry where the most concentration given to the congruity concept and the impact on the shoppers choice broadly. For the better understanding of self-concept and brand image congruity, company needs to understand the two dimensions and its implications. Companies can establish themselves with a better segment of consumers getting a clear picture and understanding of the concept. Brand has a specific image in particular and every individual as well has its own identity, company's responsibility gets higher in exercising the brand building activity (Jamal and Goode 2001). A good and sensible approach can establish the brand as required. Study support that, an object can get compared with an individual looking as an object. Self-concept is a multidimensional perspective which is applicable differently in different studies (Parker 2009). Brand image portrays of very important role in predicting brands its own value in market, so the congruity of self-concept and brand image is essential to get assessed.

Conceptualized Research Model



For the purpose of conceptualizing the thought, different dimensions have been adopted applying the deductive approach of research and concept formation.

Here the Self-Concept and Brand Image is considered as independent variables, Shopping Behavior is the dependent variable though the Self –Concept and Brand Image Congruity is moderating the impact to the shopping behavior. The conceptual model will get tested for the validation of concept.

REFERENCES

- Abel, J. I., Buff, C. L., & O’Neill, J. C. (2013). Actual self-concept versus ideal self-concept. *Sport, Business and Management: An International Journal*.
- Avison, William, R., & Morris, R. (1981). “Conceiving the Self.” *Canadian Journal of Sociology / Cahiers Canadiens de Sociologie*, 6(2):212.
- Birdwell, Al, E. (1968). “A Study of the Influence of Image Congruence on Consumer Choice.” *The Journal of Business*, 41(1):76.
- Boronczyk, F., & Breuer, C. (2019). The company you keep: Brand image transfer in concurrent event sponsorship. *Journal of Business Research*.
- Bosnjak, M., & Rudolph, N. (2008). Undesired self- image congruence in a low- involvement product context. *European Journal of Marketing*.
- Bradosti, H., & Singh, U. S. (2015). Public awareness of financial market in iraqi kurdistan. *European Journal of Business and Management*, 7(10), 300-308.
- Dörtüol, İ. T., Coşkun, A., & Kitapci, O. (2018). A Review of Factors Affecting Turkish Consumer Behaviour. *Marketing Management in Turkey*.
- Driediger, F., & Bhatiasavi, V. (2019). Online grocery shopping in Thailand: Consumer acceptance and usage behavior. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 48, 224-237.
- Gaustad, T., Samuelsen, B. M., Warlop, L., & Fitzsimons, G. J. (2019). Too much of a good thing? Consumer response to strategic changes in brand image. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 36(2), 264-280.
- Gendel-Guterman, H., & Levy, S. (2018). Status Consumption: Both an Antecedent and a Moderator of Private Label Brand Proneness. In *Advances in National Brand and Private Label Marketing* (pp. 3-10). Springer, Cham.
- Goldsmith, R. E., Moore, M. A., & Beaudoin, P. (1999). Fashion innovativeness and self- concept: a replication. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*.
- Grace, D., Ross, M., & King, C. (2020). Brand fidelity: Scale development and validation. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 52, 101908.
- Adam, P. H., & Don, S. (1998). The self-concept and image congruence hypothesis. An empirical evaluation in the motor vehicle market. *European Journal of Marketing*, 32(11-12), 1110-1123.
- Hofmann, J., Schnittka, O., Johnen, M., & Kottemann, P. (2019). Talent or popularity: What

drives market value and brand image for human brands?. *Journal of Business Research*.

- Hu, J., Xin, L., Sijun, W., & Zhilin, Y. (2012). "The Role of Brand Image Congruity in Chinese Consumers' Brand Preference." *Journal of Product & Brand Management* 21(1);26–34.
- Islam, J. U., Rahman, Z., & Hollebeek, L. D. (2018). Consumer engagement in online brand communities: a solicitation of congruity theory. *Internet Research*.
- Jamal, A., & Goode, M. M. (2001). Consumers and brands: a study of the impact of self- image congruence on brand preference and satisfaction. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*.
- Jeong, E., & Jang, S. S. (2018). The affective psychological process of self-image congruity and its influences on dining experience. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*.
- Maraz, A., Eisinger, A., Hende, B., Urbán, R., Paksi, B., Kun, B., ... & Demetrovics, Z. (2015). Measuring compulsive buying behaviour: Psychometric validity of three different scales and prevalence in the general population and in shopping centres. *Psychiatry research*, 225(3), 326-334.
- Parker, B. T. (2009). A comparison of brand personality and brand user- imagery congruence. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*.
- Patel, J. D., & Shukla, Y. S. (2016). Consumer shopping orientation: identification and characterization of outshoppers. *Journal of Indian Business Research*.
- Roe, D., & Bruwer, J. (2017). Self-concept, product involvement and consumption occasions. *British Food Journal*.
- Shankar Singh, U., & Sahin, O. (2017). A Literary Excavation of University Brand Image Past to Present. *International Journal of Social Sciences & Educational Studies*, 3(3), 174-187.
- Saran, R., Roy, S., & Sethuraman, R. (2016). Personality and fashion consumption: a conceptual framework in the Indian context. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*.
- Sung, E., (Christine), & Patricia, H. (2018). "Department vs Discount Retail Store Patronage: Effects of Self-Image Congruence." *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 35(1); 64-78.
- Sherwani, K., & Singh, U.S. (2015). Student perception on lecturer evaluation in higher education. *International Journal of Social Sciences & Educational Studies*, 49.
- Singh, U. S., & Mishra, U.S. (2015). Assessment of need for vertical coordination in supply chain of vegetable industry. *International Food Research Journal*, 22(4), 1417–1423.
- Singh, U.S., & Bradosti H. (2015). Acceptability of banking operations in Iraqi Kurdistan. *Research Journal of Finance and Accounting*, 6(9), 276-286.