

Filling in the gaps: Personality types lead people to choose certain brands

December 15 2008

Why do Gap brand jeans appeal to people who seek intimacy in relationships? It may be a result of their upbringing. According to a new study in the *Journal of Consumer Research*, people's relationship styles can affect their brand choices.

In psychology, different relationship styles are known as "attachment styles," and study authors Vanitha Swaminathan, Karen M. Stilley (University of Pittsburgh), and Rohini Ahluwalia (University of Minnesota) explored the ways attachment styles influence brand choices.

"Depending on the nature of the relationship between the infant and caregiver, an individual will develop an attachment style characterized by the following two dimensions: anxiety and avoidance," the authors explain. "The anxiety dimension refers to the extent a person's view of self is positive or negative; whereas the avoidance dimension is based on the extent to which the view of others is positive or negative."

More info: Vanitha Swaminathan, Karen M Stilley, and Rohini Ahluwalia. "When Brand Personality Matters: The Moderating Role of Attachment Styles." *Journal of Consumer Research*: April 2009.

According to the authors, anxiously attached individuals are more influenced by "brand personalities," the idea that a brand possesses humanlike traits, such as sincerity or excitement. "Because of a low view of self, anxious individuals use brands to signal their ideal self-concept to future relationship partners and therefore focus more on the

personality of the brand," the authors write.

In several studies, the researchers tested participants to determine their attachment styles. Then they asked about their desires for "sincere" versus "exciting" products. "Anxious individuals who were more avoidant of relationships tended to choose Abercrombie jeans, which were perceived to be more exciting than sincere. In contrast, anxious individuals who seek intimacy in relationships were more likely to pick Gap jeans, which were perceived as more sincere than exciting," the authors write.

"This research points out an interesting but counterintuitive finding: brand personality can be most useful for forging consumer-brand connections with consumers who tend to enjoy such deep connections in the interpersonal context," the authors conclude.

Source: University of Chicago

Citation: Filling in the gaps: Personality types lead people to choose certain brands (2008, December 15) retrieved 9 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2008-12-gaps-personality-people-brands.html>

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