Product Attachment and Product Lifetime: the Role of Personality Congruity and Fashion

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ABSTRACT

Product attachment is the emotional bond a consumer experiences with a product. This study examines the effect of congruity between the personalities of a person and a product on attachment and product lifetime. A scenario study shows that consumers develop stronger attachments to products with a personality that is congruent to their own. Although product attachment and product lifetime are related, feeling attached to a product with a congruent personality only results in a longer product lifetime for introvert people. Extroverts do not hold on to extrovert products. We propose that fashion moderates the relationship between product attachment and product lifetime.

PRODUCT ATTACHMENT

Product attachment is defined as the strength of the emotional bond experienced with a product (Schifferstein and Pelgrim 2004). This definition implies that an emotional tie exists between the owner and his/her object and that the specific product has an important meaning to the owner. When a person becomes attached to an object, (s)he is more likely to handle the product with care, to repair it when it breaks down, and to postpone its replacement (Belk 1991).

Although people may also be attached to people, places, or brands, product attachment focuses specifically on the relationship with specific objects. Accordingly, product attachment is conceptually different from the constructs: involvement, consumer-brand relationships, and materialism (Ball and Tasaki 1992; Kleine and Baker 2004; Wallendorf and Arnould 1988) that refer to product categories (e.g., Costley 1988), brands (e.g., Fournier 1998), and possessions in general (e.g., Belk 1985), respectively.

In the present study, we examine the effect of congruity between the personality of a person and his/her watch on the degree of product attachment experienced in an experimental setting. Furthermore, we provide insight in the relationship between product attachment and product lifetime. Finally, we discuss the role of fashion as a moderator for the relationship between product attachment and product lifetime.

PERSONALITY CONGRUITY

People have a need to maintain a consistent (self-consistency motive) and positive (self-enhancement motive) view of one’s self. The use of products is one way by which an individual can symbolically define and express his/her unique self (Sirgy 1982). Products serve as symbols of who we are, who we have been, and who we are attempting to become. Based on people’s tendency to behave consistently with his/her view of the self, scholars concluded that consumers prefer products that are congruent to their self-concept (e.g., Malhotra 1988; Sirgy 1982). People make a comparison between their own self-concept and the product image and prefer those products that have an image congruent with their self.

Based on the theory of self-congruity, Aaker (1999) and Govers and Schoormans (2005) found that consumers prefer products and brands with a set of personality characteristics congruent to their own. These products can help to maintain and express their identity. For example, a person can express that he is tough by driving in a tough car, such as a Land Rover.

Several qualitative and survey studies on product attachment have concluded that the degree to which a product is used to define and maintain a person’s self not only affects preference, but also the experience of an emotional bond to a product during ownership (Ball and Tasaki 1992; Belk 1988; Kleine, Kleine, and Allen 1995; Wallendorf and Arnould 1988). People develop strong attachments to products that define who they are as an individual, whereas least favorite possessions (weak attachments) often bring about associations that are “not me” (Kleine et al. 1995). Accordingly, we hypothesize that congruity between the personality of a person and that of his/her product will positively affect the experience of an emotional bond to this product:

H1: People experience stronger attachments to products with a personality that is congruent to their own personality, than to products with a personality that is incongruent.

CONSEQUENCE OF ATTACHMENT: PRODUCT LIFETIME

Schultz, Kleine and Kernan (1989) stated that our most cherished possessions are: “things which we would loath to give up, things which would be difficult to replace—in short, things to which we have become strongly attached” (p. 359). This implies that product attachment and product lifetime are connected. As discussed, a product to which one feels attached means a lot to the owner. Consequently, if a person should lose such a product, (s)he will experience an emotional loss. People exhibit more protective behaviors to products to which they are attached. Consequently, they will try to postpone their replacement as long as possible, which results in an extension of the product lifetime (Ball and Tasaki 1992; Belk 1991; Schultz et al. 1989).

Based on these arguments, we believe that the product lifetime is a direct consequence of the experience of attachment to a product. Determinants of product attachment will thus also affect product lifetime indirectly. Product attachment can thus be considered as a mediator for the effect of personality congruity on product lifetime (see figure 1). Accordingly, we hypothesize:

H2: People will keep products with a personality that is congruent to their own personality for a longer time period than products with a personality that is incongruent.

H3: Product attachment mediates the effect of personality congruity on product lifetime.

METHOD

This study uses a scenario-approach to create conditions of high and low personality congruity. A scenario or a vignette is a “short story about hypothetical characters in specified circumstances to which the interviewee is invited to respond” (Finch 1987, p. 105). Scenarios can play a useful role in theory construction. Accordingly, they are often used in research on post-purchase affect (e.g., Tsairos and Mittal 2000). Scenarios are useful for the study of attachment, because they allow studying processes that develop over a long period of time. In addition, they allow focusing on the topic of interest while controlling for additional variables that would interact in a real-life situation (e.g., type of product, memo-
ries elicited by the product, financial aspects). This selective representation of the real world can help to disentangle the complexities and conflicts present in everyday life (Hughes and Huby 2002).

A large degree of correspondence was found between the emotions experienced in a real life setting and the emotions subjects in a scenario-setting believed they were likely to experience (Robinson and Clore 2001). Moreover, asking people what a fictional other would do or think in a specific situation is a well-known projection technique in qualitative research (Gordon and Langmaid 1995). What respondents indicate as the experience of another may be interpreted as what they would do or think if they were in a similar situation.

In this study, the scenarios include a written description of the personality of a person and a picture of a product that is (in)congruent with the personality of the person. Subjects are asked to predict the degree of product attachment and the product lifetime. In the following section, two pretests and the main study are reported. The pretests are performed to check whether the personality manipulations are perceived as intended (pretest 1) and to select the product variants with the desired personalities (pretest 2).

**Stimulus Material**

For the success of the manipulation of our study, it was essential that subjects recognized both the personality of the person and the personality of the product. We chose to select the dimension extroversion, because in person perception this dimension was found to be best recognized by observers (Kenny et al. 1994). To create conditions of high and low personality congruity, we generated an extrovert (introvert) person and an extrovert (introvert) product.

**Pretest 1: Manipulation of Person’s Personality.** An impression of an extrovert and an introvert person was created using written descriptions. Both descriptions portrayed a 27-year-old woman, named Susan, and depicted her as either extrovert or introvert by unfolding her character traits. The descriptions were developed using items from several human personality tests (e.g., Hendriks, Hofstee, and De Raad 1995).

Twenty-eight subjects rated one of the persons portrayed on five items that are typical for the personality trait extroversion: (1) “not conspicuous”/“very conspicuous”, (2) “not exuberant”/“very exuberant”, (3) “not sociable”/“very sociable”, (4) “not defiant”/“very defiant”, and (5) “not cheerful”/“very cheerful” (α=.88). All items were measured using five-point scales. The mean score of the extrovert person was significantly higher than the scale’s neutral midpoint (M=4.08, SD=.47; t(14)=9.38, p<.001), whereas the mean score of the introvert person was significantly lower (M=2.08, SD=.47; t(12)=7.04, p<.001).

**Pretest 2: Manipulation of Product’s Personality.** A second pre-test was conducted to select an extrovert and an introvert product. Scholars in the design field have argued that consumer durables can have personalities as a result of their design (Janlert and Stolterman 1997; Jordan 2002). A set of eight color pictures of women’s watches encompassing a variety of appearances was rated by 20 subjects on the five extroversion items used in the first pretest (α=.90). The watches did not differ in functionality and were similar in price. Watches were selected as stimuli, because this product category is regarded as highly self-expressive. The watches with the highest and lowest mean on the extroversion trait were selected as stimuli. The mean score of the extrovert product was significantly higher than the neutral midpoint of the scale (M=3.99, SD=.69; t(19)=6.38, p<.001), whereas the mean score of the introvert product was significantly lower (M=1.68, SD=.54; t(19)=10.29, p<.001).

**Subjects and Design**

For the main study, 160 subjects were selected from a consumer household panel. Hundred-fifteen subjects (58 males and 57 females) returned their questionnaire in time, a response rate of 72%. Ages ranged from 26 to 73 years, with an average age of 50. Subjects were rewarded financially.

The main study had a 2 (personality of the person: extrovert vs. introvert) × 2 (product personality: extrovert vs. introvert) between-subjects full factorial design. Four experimental conditions were generated, two resulting in high congruity between the personality of the person and that of the product and two resulting in low congruity. Each subject was assigned randomly to one of the four conditions.

**Procedure and Measures**

Subjects received a scenario and a questionnaire by mail. The scenario consisted of a written description of the person’s personality and a color picture of a watch. The watch was presented as owned by the person. Subjects were instructed to read the description of the person carefully to form an impression of the person described, and to look at the picture of the watch. Subsequently, measures for the dependent variables and several covariates were obtained on seven-point Likert scales (1=“strongly disagree”, 7=“strongly agree”), unless indicated otherwise. To minimize demand characteristics, four multi-item filler variables were included in the questionnaire.

**Dependent Variables.** Product attachment was measured with four items: (1) “This watch has no special meaning to Susan (-)”, (2) “This watch is very dear to Susan”, (3) “Susan has a bond with this watch”, (4) “Susan is very attached to this watch” (α=.81).

To measure the expected product lifetime, we informed subjects that, on average, young women replace their watch after 3 years. Subjects were asked to indicate on an ordinal scale how long they expected Susan to keep her watch (“shorter than 3 years”, “about 3 years”, and “longer than 3 years”).

**Covariates.** Four covariates were included in the questionnaire to control for possible side effects of the scenarios. First, subjects’ attitude toward Susan was measured using three items on scales anchored with “negative”/“positive”, “unfavorable”/“favorable”, “dislike”/“like” (α=.89). Second, subjects’ attitude toward the watch was measured using the same three items (α=.93). Third, the degree to which subjects recognized themselves in Susan was measured with three self-generated items: (1) “I recognize myself in Susan”, (2) “Susan’s character is similar to my own personality”, and (3) “I resemble Susan” (α=.93).

A potential pitfall of the use of scenarios is that the scenario may not be considered credible by the subjects. If the scenario differs too much from the experiences of the subject, problems of validity may occur (Finch 1987; Hughes and Huby 2002). Therefore, the fourth covariate measured the scenario’s credibility with six items: (1) “I find the story of Susan credible”, (2) “The story of Susan seems artificial (-)”, (3) “I think the story of Susan is plausible”, (4) “I could empathize with the story of Susan well”, (5) “I found it hard to imagine Susan’s situation (-)”, and (6) “I could project myself in Susan’s situation well” (α=.83).

**RESULTS**

**Manipulation Check**

The manipulation check for personality congruity was not included in the main study to minimize demand characteristics. This separate pilot (n=28) had a 2 (personality of the person: extrovert vs. introvert) × 2 (product personality: extrovert vs. introvert) factorial design. One written description of the person’s
personality and color photo-quality pictures of the two watches were presented to each subject. Personality congruity was measured with four items using five-point scales (Govers and Schoormans 2005): (1) “This watch is (not) like Susan”, (2) “Susan (does not) identify herself with the watch”, (3) “This watch matches (does not match) with Susan’s personality”, and (4) “This watch is (in)consistent with the way Susan sees herself” (α=.93). The results showed a strong and significant interaction effect between personality of the person and product personality (F(1, 26)=86.18, p<.001, η²=.77). As shown in figure 2, the two conditions with Susan and the watch having a congruent personality indeed resulted in the experience of high personality congruity (M_ME=4.30 and M_MI=3.37), whereas the conditions with Susan and the watch having incongruent personalities resulted in low personality congruity (M_ME=1.84 and M_MI=1.73).

Credibility of Scenarios

The scenarios were judged as highly credible (M=5.44, SD=1.02). Ninety percent of the subjects had a mean score on credibility that was equal or higher than the midpoint of the scale. No differences were found between the four conditions (p>.20).

Tests of the Hypotheses

Effect of Personality Congruity on Product Attachment. To control for effects of subjects’ attitude toward Susan, subjects’ attitude toward the watch, recognition in Susan’s personality, and credibility of the scenario, these variables were used as covariates in an analysis of covariance. None of the covariates proved to be significant and were, therefore, excluded from the final analysis (p>.20).

To investigate whether high personality congruity resulted in a higher degree of product attachment than low personality congruity, a 2×2 ANOVA was conducted with product attachment as the dependent variable and the personalities of the person and the product as the independent variables. The results revealed a significant interaction effect between personality of the person and product personality (F(1, 109)=17.28, p<.001, η²=.14). Subjects who read about the extrovert person and were presented with the extrovert watch predicted a higher degree of product attachment as compared to those presented with the introvert watch (M_ME=3.54 vs. M_MI=2.73, t(50)=-2.09, p<.05). Similarly, subjects who read about the introvert person and were presented with the introvert watch predicted a higher degree of product attachment as compared to
those presented with the extrovert watch ($M_E=4.36$ vs. $M_I=2.93$, $t(59)=3.86$, $p<.001$) (see figure 3). Hypothesis 1 was thus confirmed. No main effects were found ($p>.05$).

Effect of Personality Congruity on Product Lifetime. Product lifetime differed significantly between the four conditions (Kruskal-Wallis test: $\chi^2=52.92$, $df=3$, $p<.001$). Although product lifetime was measured on an ordinal scale, we proceeded by analyzing these data by a $2 \times 2$ analysis of covariance (Gaito 1980), because this enabled us to investigate the role of product attachment in mediating the effect of product congruity on product lifetime. Product lifetime was recoded as follows (1="shorter than 3 years", 2="about 3 years", and 3="longer than 3 years"). All covariates proved to be insignificant and were excluded from the analysis ($p>.05$). The results showed a significant interaction between personality of the person and product personality ($F(1, 109)=19.99$, $p<.001$, $\eta^2=.16$). Furthermore, significant main effects for personality of the person ($F(1, 109)=56.69$, $p<.001$, $\eta^2=.34$) and product personality ($F(1, 109)=30.64$, $p<.001$, $\eta^2=.22$) were found. Figure 3 illustrates that these results differ considerably from the product attachment results: Subjects who read about the extrovert person and were presented with the extrovert watch did not predict a longer product lifetime as compared to those presented with the introvert watch ($M_I=2.70$ vs. $M_E=1.50$, $t(58)=6.28$, $p<.001$). Hypothesis 2 was thus only confirmed for the introvert personality.

Mediation Analysis. To test whether product attachment and product lifetime are positively related, the Spearman rank correlation between product attachment and product lifetime was computed (Spearman $r=.44$, $p<.01$). Higher degrees of product attachment go together with longer product lifetime ($M_{<3yrs}=2.91$, $M_{\geq3yrs}=4.00$, $M_{<3yrs}=4.36$).

To investigate the role of product attachment in mediating the effect of personality congruity on product lifetime, Baron and Kenny’s (1986) framework for mediation was used. Hence, an ANCOVA was performed with product lifetime as the dependent variable and the mediator product attachment included as a covariate.

Product attachment significantly affected product lifetime ($F(1, 106)=10.94$, $p<.01$). The interaction effect between personality of the person and product personality reduced in effect size, when product attachment was included as a covariate ($F(1, 106)=8.72$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=.08$; $\Delta\eta^2=-51\%$). This finding demonstrated that product attachment mediates the effect of personality congruity on product lifetime, supporting hypothesis 3. Including product attachment as a covariate did not have a substantial impact on the main effects for personality of the person ($\Delta\eta^2=-9\%$) and product personality ($\Delta\eta^2=-5\%$).

DISCUSSION

This study shows that people become more attached to products that have a personality that is congruent to their own. These products are used to define and maintain a person’s self. However,
our findings suggest that this emotional bond does not necessarily result in a long-lasting relationship with the product. Although we found support for the role of product attachment in mediating the effect of personality congruity on product lifetime, personality congruity only resulted in a longer product lifetime for the introvert personality. For the extrovert personality, the expected product lifetime was rated below average for the incongruent as well as for the congruent product. Thus, although the person felt attached to the product, this product was still discarded earlier than is common for the product category. We believe the observed differences may be related to fashion. Past research concluded that fashion changes can change a person’s relationship to a product (Roster 2001) and encourage early product replacement (Bayus 1991; DeBell and Dardis 1979). Moreover, watches are considered fashion products. Based on a further analysis of the stimuli material, we propose that fashion may influence the effect of personality congruity.

Role of Fashion as a Moderator
According to McCracken (1986), the fashion system is an instrument to transfer meaning to consumer goods. Consumers encode these meanings and use fashion to develop a personal identity (Thompson and Haytko 1997). A fashion is defined as “a style that is accepted and followed by the majority of a group at any particular time” (Jernigan and Easterling 1990, p. 7). Products follow different fashion styles that vary in their fashion cycle. Some fashion styles (short-lived fashions or fads) enjoy a sudden burst of popularity and disappear very quickly. Other fashions (long-lived fashion styles or fads) enjoy a sudden burst of popularity and disappear very quickly. Other fashions (long-lived fashions or classics) and the products that follow such a fashion continue to be popular and remain to be in general acceptance over a particular time (Jernigan and Easterling 1990).

Consumers can become attached to products with a design following a short-lived fashion, but most often only for a relatively short time period. When the fashion cycle has reached the obsolescence phase, the product style goes “out of fashion”. In general, people have a negative attitude toward products that are old-fashioned. Because people strive to maintain a positive view of the self (self-enhancement motive), an old-fashioned product is less valuable for maintaining a person’s self and, therefore, the experience of product attachment will decrease. If the experience of attachment to a product decreases, consumers become more willing to replace this product.

The extrovert watch used as stimulus material in this study has an eye-catching and colorful design, and the introvert watch follows a simple style with inconspicuous colors. In general, the design characteristics of the extrovert watch are associated with short-lived fashions, whereas long-lived fashions have design characteristics similar to the introvert watch. Hence, we believe that the extrovert watch was expected to be discarded on the short term also by the extroverts, because it is more fashionable than the introvert one. To test this assumption, we performed a post hoc test. Ninety-four subjects rated one of the two watches on three seven-point scales (“not fashionable”/“very fashionable”, “not trendy”/“very trendy”, and “not timeless”/“very timeless” (-), α=.82). In accordance with our expectations, the extrovert watch was considered more fashionable than the introvert watch ($M_{E}=5.19$ vs. $M_{I}=3.16$; $t(92)=9.60$, $p<.001$).

In conclusion, the findings of the post hoc test support the hypothesis that fashion can influence the product lifetime of a congruent product. Based on these results, we believe that personality congruity does not result in a longer product lifetime for the extrovert condition, because the extrovert watch is more fashionable. As a result, fashion changes encourage the extrovert person to replace the extrovert watch early, even though its personality is congruent to his/her own personality.

CONCLUSION
Research on human relationships revealed that similarity in personality positively influences the duration and quality of long-term relationships between two spouses (e.g., Antill 1983). Analogously, the present study shows that similarity in personality is also relevant for the development of an emotional relationship between a person and a product. People become more attached to products with a personality that is congruent to their own. We believe that self-congruent products serve people’s needs to maintain a consistent view of the self. Hence, these findings support and extend other work on product attachment that suggested that people become more attached to products that are used to define and maintain a person’s self (e.g., Ball and Tasaki 1992; Kleine et al. 1995; Schultz et al. 1989).

Second, our findings show that personality congruity does not necessarily imply that the consumer-product relationship will be long-lasting. Product attachment is not static, but changes over time due to dynamics in the product, the consumer, and the situational context (Ball and Tasaki 1992; Kleine and Baker 2004; Schultz et al. 1989). Fashion may serve as a moderator for the relationship between product attachment and product lifetime. A necessary condition for an extension of the product lifetime appears to be that the product’s design remains to be in general fashion acceptance. Otherwise, evaluation of the product as being old-fashioned will decline the product’s value for maintaining a positive and consistent view of the self, resulting in early detachment and a premature replacement of the product.

Implications
From the viewpoint of sustainability, it is interesting to create longer lasting products. Replacing and disposing products creates an environmental burden, because it produces waste and uses up scarce resources. Scholars have proposed product attachment as a means for designers to stimulate product longevity (e.g., Mugge, Schoormans, and Schifferstein 2005; Van Hemel and Brezet 1997). Our research shows that designing products with pre-determined personalities can be valuable to stimulate product attachment and thereby extend the product lifetime. However, product attachment only results in an extension of the product lifetime if the product is not fashionable. Consequently, the eco-design strategy to stimulate product attachment should be combined with the strategy to reduce a product’s fashionability by creating a ‘classic design’ (e.g., Van Hemel and Brezet 1997).

Limitations and Future Research
A limitation of our study is that we solely investigate watches as stimulus material. Watches are conspicuous, hedonic products for which congruity and fashion may be relatively important. However, past research also revealed congruity effects for more utilitarian products (Govers and Schoormans 2005). More research is needed to establish the role of fashion for different product categories. Another limitation of the use of a watch as stimulus material is that it is presented as an ordinary possession. It is likely that the role of fashion on product lifetime is less important for products with deep, symbolic meanings, such as heirlooms. Future research should examine the relationships between product attachment, fashion, and product lifetime for these “most cherished” products.

A second limitation of this research is that we investigate a complex construct as personality in a simplified manner by focusing on only one personality dimension for a hypothetical person. More research is needed in real-life situations to fully understand the relationships between congruity, product attachment, product lifetime, and fashion.
Extrovert person

Susan is 27 years old and married to Stephan. She works as a pr-employee for a large media-company. When Susan enters a room, she will not remain unnoticed; she will take care of that herself with her enormous enthusiasm and liveliness. She would not like to go through life as a dull person. According to Stephan, the sun starts shining when she walks in, but she can irritate some people by her exaggerated presence. However, for her hobby her need for attention is very convenient: she is a singer in a band. She also spends a lot of time on her social life: she has many friends and she likes to be in the company of people. “The more, the merrier” is one of her mottos. Her friends would describe her as a special young woman who is always in for everything and who does not mince her words. Her ideal holiday is an active one, and it should be in a crowded area; it is nothing like her to stay in a remote cabin in the woods.

Introvert person

Susan is 27 years old and married to Stephan. She works in a chemical laboratory as an assistant. Although she likes her colleagues, she will not easily have a drink with them on Friday as is customary to do, because she never has a lot to say to them. Susan cannot bear to think of being the center of interest. According to Stephan, still waters run deep, but some people will typify her area as distant. Susan has a few very close friends, whom she has known for a very long time. She finds it hard to make contact and to get a conversation going. She prefers to stay at home on a couch with a good book or magazine. Her friends would characterize her as someone, who only speaks her true mind, if you know her well. Her ideal holiday is a hiking holiday with her husband to a remote cabin to enjoy the silence. A holiday in a crowded area is nothing for her.

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Cinderella and Sleeping Beauty: Conscious and Unconscious Evaluation of Archetypes Used in Advertising and Movies - Results from an Experimental Study
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
In the consumer behaviour literature, there are already several articles dealing with Jungian archetypes from a qualitative research perspective. By contrast, we investigate Jung’s theory from a positivistic research perspective. The key issue is whether archetypes influence the conscious assessment of commercials, brands, and movies as well as unconscious approach reactions. Do men and women react similarly to the exposure and do different personality types vary in the degree to which they are attracted by archetypal advertising and movies?

Jung’s theory considers the so-called “collective unconscious” as one part of the psyche and this makes his theory stand out from others. The collective unconscious can be characterized as the body of knowledge with which all human beings are born. This knowledge is characterized by so-called “archetypes” that represent inborn and universal ways of perceiving the world. Therefore, archetypes are reflected in fairy tales and myths.

Jung describes a substantial variety of archetypal images (Jung 1954/1959a,b), but in our empirical study, we devoted special attention to fairy tale archetypes and especially from both a male and female perspective. The male perspective concerns the hero, who is characterized as a man who can master all challenges in life and is able to rescue an unhappy or threatened woman. The female perspective considers the Cinderella-archetype, the young, innocent and beautiful woman, who is in distress or misery and is rescued by a gallant prince who promises her a wonderful life free of worry and care.

Archetypes have an instinctive or biological function and activate behaviour. In order to gain insight into the (un)conscious activation reactions of test persons, we measured electrodermal reactions (EDR) so as to explore the phasic arousal (Boucsein 1992) evoked by archetypal stimuli. Archetypal advertising resonates from innate human universals and focuses on innate needs. This would suggest that a message that is compatible with innate desires or desired behaviour will be more effective (in terms of approach behaviour towards this special message) than one that is less focused on these innate drives. That means that a TV-commercial which uses a typical fairy tale archetype will evoke higher phasic arousal reactions than commercials without such an archetype.

In order to analyse this issue, we conducted an empirical study that compares an archetypal TV-commercial with four other non-archetypal commercials and demonstrates significantly higher arousal for the archetypal spot. A fundamental result is that archetypes are clearly valuable tools for appealing to consumers in advertising.

Furthermore, the popularity of archetype-oriented movies is particularly relevant in this context. Movies portraying genuinely meaningful archetypal figures create living icons that are used by consumers as important personal anchors (Hirschman 2000). Hence, we propose that movies presenting typical Cinderella-archetypes as characters will generally evoke higher phasic arousal and be evaluated more positively than films presenting brave, aggressive and selfish female characters. To examine this question empirically, we compared “Pretty Woman” as a typical archetype-oriented movie with “Gone With The Wind” which presents Scarlett O’Hara as brave woman. The results show significantly higher arousal and a more favourable attitude towards the movie presenting the Cinderella-archetype.

However, feminists (Lauter and Rupprecht 1985) argue that Jung’s concepts have helped men enhance patriarchal myths and undervalue the merits of women as well as their experience and power. Furthermore, archetypes (though principally stable over time and culture) are nevertheless embedded in socialization processes. Therefore, we could question whether typical archetypes like “Cinderella” or “Sleeping Beauty” really reflect men’s and women’s present ideals.

From a male perspective, we could question whether men are still attracted by the hero-scheme. Does a man always feel capable of mastering all obstacles and is he really keen on assuming responsibility for his wife and family or does the hero concept lead to a feeling of being burdened? We found no gender differences with respect to the effects of the commercials and the movies. This might indicate that men can indeed identify with the hero, and women with the rescued maiden.

From a female perspective, we propose that self-concept clarity (Campbell et al. 1996) and romanticism (Holbrook and Olney 1995) also impact on the evaluation of typical archetypes. We further assume that females who perceive themselves as romantic characters and who have unclear self-concepts will be more attracted by Cinderella-archetypal figures, because these fairy tales give a source of hope by showing how life could improve. We found support for this hypothesis.

Because archetypes refer to deep structures of the human mind, they act as organizing principles. Thus, we propose that the response to archetypal stimuli is consistent, regardless of whether they appear as commercials or movies. Therefore, we assume consistency: consumers who show high phasic arousal reactions towards the archetypal TV-commercial will also be highly activated by the archetypal movie. Therefore, we analysed the correlation between arousal parameters of the archetypal commercial on the one hand, and the archetypal movie on the other hand, and found highly significant correlations.

Further research should control whether the arousal reactions of the TV-commercial are evoked because of the product category (sweets) or because of the well-known brand name or solely by the archetype-theme. In addition, a potential “Julia Roberts artefact” should be controlled. In our study, we chose the movie “Gone With The Wind”, because Scarlett O’Hara is probably one of the most prominent examples of a fearless female character. However, “Gone With The Wind” was shot before World War II and is set during the American Civil War, whereas “Pretty Woman” was produced in 1990 and features a modern “zeitgeist”. Furthermore, Julia Roberts is one of the most popular actresses in Hollywood and the arousal reaction to “Pretty Woman” might simply be due to her fresh and contemporary charisma. However, the initial results of a second experiment, in which we compared “Pretty Woman” to another movie starring Julia Roberts, this time not in a “Cinderella” role but in that of an emancipated woman, support the findings of the first study.

Some limitations of our empirical results should be mentioned. Firstly, our findings are based on relatively small sample sizes. This is due mainly to the intricate EDA measurement process.