



Brand Anthropomorphism, Brand Reputation, and Consumer Engagement in the Distribution of Smartphone Brands

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aims to analyze the impact of Brand Anthropomorphism and Intimacy on Brand Engagement, and at the same time analyze the regulatory effect of Brand Reputation on the relationship between Brand Anthropomorphism and Intimacy and the relationship between Intimacy and Brand Engagement in terms of distribution brand. **Results:** The findings show that Brand Anthropomorphism, Intimacy, and Brand Reputation are important value factors in customers' minds toward their behavior, and from there, they will contribute to creating positive emotions and interactions between consumers and brands. **Research design, data, and methodology:** This article used the quantitative technique utilizing PLS-SEM software to test the hypothesis with 1,060 samples. Collected data shows that consumers in Ho Chi Minh City have positive emotions and interactive and social behaviors toward smartphone brands. **Conclusion:** The study has demonstrated the conclusions and proposed solutions to help smartphone brands build Brand Anthropomorphism while enhancing Brand Reputation thereby achieving Intimacy, which leads to consumer Brand Engagement. In addition, this study complements the concept of Brand Anthropomorphism which is lacking in theoretical background and is the first study in Vietnam to explore the prefixes and suffixes of the concept of Brand Anthropomorphism and the regulatory role of Brand Reputation.

Keywords: Brand Anthropomorphism, Intimacy, Brand Engagement, Brand Reputation, Distribution

JEL Classification code: M16, M31

1. Introduction

A smartphone distribution brand builds strong relationships with consumers that make them loyal customers, which is not easy. Especially, competition in the

smartphone market is becoming stronger worldwide in general and in Vietnam in particular. By 2022, the number of smartphone users worldwide is estimated to reach 6.6 billion. This estimate is higher than the number of smartphone users in 2016 of 2.9 billion, an increase of 79%.

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In Vietnam, there are 93.5 million smartphone subscribers, accounting for more than 90% of the population. In Ho Chi Minh City, the percentage of adults using smartphones reached 75.7%, in third place compared to the whole country. At the same time, in Ho Chi Minh City, there are many retail symbol companies in the field of e-commerce, including prominent names such as The Gioi Di Dong, CellphoneS, FPT Shop, Viettel Store... The dense presence of retail businesses shows that consumers' demand for owning smartphones is very high and that Ho Chi Minh City has the highest population density in the country, with the youngest people in the population. Furthermore, in a high-competition market between retailers, consumer demand is also affected, stimulated, and increased. It can be seen that Ho Chi Minh City is the ideal place to carry out the project.

The reason the smartphone became necessary is that the functionality it provides is on par with the functions of a computer but is judged to be superior due to its durability and versatility (Tossell et al., 2012). When people's lives are getting more complicated, smartphones are changing the way we live, learn, think, and communicate (Lane & Manner, 2011). Therefore, owning a smartphone is extremely important, but which phone brand will consumers trust and choose? First, as Aggarwal and McGill (2007) previously determined that the ability of consumers to personify and evaluate a product, is highly dependent on the extent to which human-like features are added to the product. At the same time, Fournier and Alvarez (2012) argue that for a brand to become an important bridge in the relationship between the consumer and the brand, it must be personified, that is the brand that possesses the qualities of a human being, capable of behavior, emotions, and feelings. In addition, the satisfaction between the brand and the consumer will motivate the consumer to make an emotional connection with the brand (Almubarak et al., 2018), also known as Intimacy. Intimacy is a factor that tends to focus on consumers' attitudes towards the brand image and is largely shaped by positive emotions such as excitement, happiness, enjoyment, and fun, along with other expressions such as support, trust, satisfaction, connection with the brand as well as the premise to create Brand Engagement (Cho et al., 2015).

However, in addition to the Brand Anthropomorphism factor, the decision of whether consumers are consistent with the brand also depends on the impact of Brand Reputation on them. Because when consumers buy any product, they will consider the Brand Reputation, and consumers will find that a brand with a good reputation has less risk (Agmeka & Fanni, 2019). In Ho Chi Minh City, most of the world's leading brands of smartphone brands already exist, such as Samsung, Intel, Nokia, Apple, Microsoft, Sony, Oppo, and Xiaomi... This proves that Vietnam's smartphone market has great potential and

competitiveness. With the changing trend, it is not easy for smartphone brands to establish strong relationships with consumers and make them loyal customers. Currently, besides the technology factor, which is already saturated in the smartphone brand market, can Brand Anthropomorphism and Brand Reputation factors help the smartphone brand win the love and engagement of consumers?

Realizing that the research topic on the influence of Brand Anthropomorphism and Brand Reputation, especially in the field of smartphone brands in Vietnam in general and Ho Chi Minh City, is an important and necessary issue for enterprises. In this way, enterprises can understand the impact of Brand Anthropomorphism factors and Brand Reputation factors and use the suggestions in the research paper to improve business performance and future brand positioning. The study also studied and identified the Brand Anthropomorphism elements that affect the relationship between consumers and smartphone brands. At the same time, measure the degree of regulation of Brand Reputation to the relationships between Brand Anthropomorphism, Intimacy, and Brand Engagement. That is the reason why the research team carried out the project.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses

2.1. Theory of Planned Behavior

The Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) adds "perceived behavioral control" to the theory of reasoned action (TRA; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) to explain activities over which people lack total control. Attitudes, subjective standards, and perceived behavioral control influence behavior, according to TPB (Ajzen, 1991). Ajzen (1991) defined attitude as a good or negative response to things, people, organizations, and events. Subjective norms are the expectation that a major person or group would endorse an activity. Society's expectations and people's desire to comply affect their standards (Ajzen, 1991). Perceived behavioral control affects activity ease.

The TPB's attitude-intention interaction is important. Numerous types of research support this relationship. Bentler and Speckart (1979) were early researchers. Attitudes may affect behavior directly or indirectly via intention. Behavior also affects perceived behavioral control. This study examines attitude, purpose, and perceived behavioral control. Engaged behavior defines a study model's variables.

2.2. Brand Anthropomorphism

The term anthropomorphism comes from the Greek words (human) and (morphe) (shape or form).

Anthropomorphism is the propensity of a person to see inanimate things as human-like beings (Guthrie, 1993). Epley et al. (2007) defined these phenomena as the assignment of human-like qualities, motivations, actions, emotions, and baseline states to non-human objects and agents. Kim and McGill (2011); Aggarwal and McGill (2012) have examined Brand Anthropomorphism, commonly known as anthropomorphism about branded items (BA). Brand Anthropomorphism is a crucial component of the connection between customers and brands (Fournier & Alvarez, 2012). Brand Anthropomorphism encompasses two distinct customer aspects (Epley et al., 2007; MacInnis, 2016). First, Brand Anthropomorphism is triggered when customers see a physical resemblance between a brand and a person. Brand Anthropomorphism happens when customers see parallels between personified brands and their self-concepts (MacInnis, 2016).

Four Factors of Brand Anthropomorphism

Brand Anthropomorphism is divided into four main aspects according to Golossenko et al. (2020) which are: Appearance (BAA), Moral Virtue (BAM), Cognitive Experience (BACE), and Conscious Emotionality (BACY). The Appearance aspect, which describes the similarities between the brand and the person, is easily seen with the eyes. In the next aspect, Cognitive Experience is the perception of a brand having the mental states necessary to be human (Kim & McGill, 2011; Puzakova et al., 2009). For a brand to qualify as an individual, it must demonstrate that it has qualities such as kindness, honesty, and dependability, which constitute Moral Virtue (Sapontzis, 1981). In addition, Brand Anthropomorphism requires the brand to be aware of human emotional states (Epley et al., 2007; Puzakova et al., 2009) which is the way of looking at Conscious Emotionality.

2.3. Intimacy

Intimacy (IN) is referred to as an attitude with the desire to talk about something, as well as to share one's own story with others in the most detailed way (Berlant, 1998). In addition, Reis and Shaver (1988) suggest that Intimacy is also related to feelings, behaviors, verbal, or nonverbal communication processes as well as personality traits. In marketing research, Sternberg (1997) argues that Intimacy is a consumer's closeness, interaction, and engagement with a brand. Intimacy is also characterized by a detailed understanding of the brand and what it means to the consumer (Fournier, 1998). Therefore, Almubarak et al. (2017) assess the level of Intimacy between consumers and brands based on the degree of interpersonal Intimacy, which is specifically expressed in terms of consumers' positive emotions toward brands.

At the same time, Intimacy will motivate consumers to establish an emotional connection with the brand (Almubarak et al., 2018). Cho et al. (2015) suggest that Intimacy is a factor that tends to focus on consumers' attitudes about brand image and is largely shaped by positive emotions such as excitement, happiness, enjoyment, and fun, along with other expressions such as support, trust, satisfaction, connection, and brand loyalty.

2.4. Brand Engagement

Regardless of the field, the concept of cohesion includes three characteristics (Brodie et al. 2011). The first is positive manifestations regardless of the form of engagement, such as social engagement in the field of psychology or communication engagement in marketing. The second feature is high engagement, and the third feature is the multidimensionality of the concept. Brand Engagement (BE) is seen as the consumer's interactive experience with the brand, which then reflects the nature of that relationship (Hollebeek 2014; Hollebeek 2014). In summary, Brand Engagement can be viewed as a multidimensional psychological state that is a consequence of interacting with a brand, including Emotional (BEE), Cognitive (BEC), and Social (BES) aspects (So et al., 2014; Vivek et al., 2014).

Hollebeek and Glynn (2014) defined the Emotional aspect of Brand Engagement as referring to the positive level of consumers' interaction with the brand. The Cognitive dimension of Brand Engagement refers to an individual's degree of cognitive investment in specific interactions with a brand (Vivek et al., 2014). The Social aspect refers to enhancing interaction by bringing others into the relationship between the brand and consumers (Block et al., 2010; Van Doorn et al., 2010).

2.5. Brand Reputation

Milewicz and Herbig (1994) say that Brand Reputation (BR) is something a brand looks for over time and that a brand with a good reputation generates positive word of mouth, potentially attracting more customers. At the same time, awareness is enhanced, and consumers can react sensitively to any flaws of the brand. This makes it difficult for brands to gain the trust of consumers (Milewicz & Herbig, 1994). Hasan et al. (2009) argued that Brand Reputation is composed of reputation and brand, reputation means trustworthy, sincere, and honest, it can be developed through advertising and public relations, but can also be affected by the quality and performance of the product. In addition, Milewicz and Herbig (1994) argue that Brand Reputation is mainly created from the flow of information from one user to another and that Brand Reputation can be

assessed through consumer opinions, consumer comments, and consumer confidence.

Hewett et al. (2016) argue that Brand Reputation is a brand experience, opinion about brand events, or simply an individual's perception of that brand, which can be positive or negative to varying degrees. At the same time, Rust et al. (2021) also refer to brand reputation as connoting general impressions of how stakeholders think, feel, and talk about a brand.

2.6. Brand Anthropomorphism and Intimacy

A Triangular Theory of Love to study the relationship between consumers and brands, and the main part is Intimacy. In addition, Ouwensloot and Tudorica (2001) make the point that brands are personified in the minds of consumers and consumers tend to build relationships with brands like with people. When consumers establish an intimate relationship with a brand, they will trust that brand more than other brands, if that brand is seen as having human characteristics (Aggarwal & McGill, 2012). Today, the undeniably important place of smartphones in all human activities, brands are constantly developing products to provide consumers with intimate and desirable experiences, and they want to win the favor of customers among countless other brands. Therefore, the smartphone market is considered a potential and growing playground. Consumers look for and consider product choices mostly from the characteristics of the product or brand and gradually form an intimate relationship between consumers and the brand. From there, the research team proposes the following hypothesis:

H1: Brand Anthropomorphism has a positive effect on Intimacy.

2.7. Intimacy and Brand Engagement

Intimacy is a type of person-to-person relationship, defined as a feeling of closeness and engagement between two people in a relationship (Kozinets, 2014). Brand Intimacy develops similarly, and consumers' feelings of closeness to the brand motivate them to learn more about the brand and engage in brand-associated behavior (Kemp et al., 2013). Intimacy improves consumer engagement and interaction, enhances the relationship between consumers and brands, and ensures that these relationships take place successfully (Kozinets, 2014). Moreover, in the studies of Graffigna and Gambetti (2015), Intimacy has been included in the emotional component of the engagement relationship between consumers and brands. Today, consumers' preference for a phone brand is often shaped by the emotion, experience, and Intimacy that a phone brand offers to

consumers better than other brands other. For these reasons, the research team proposes the following hypothesis:

H2: Intimacy has a positive effect on Brand Engagement.

2.8. Brand Anthropomorphism and Brand Engagement

Cesario et al. (2008) observe that consumers tend to see brands similarly as they see others in interpersonal relationships. In the study of Lim et al. (2021), the author proposed that Brand Anthropomorphism is a necessary element to build Brand Engagement. At the same time, Chen et al. (2015) mentioned that consumers perceive anthropomorphized brands to bring them intimacy and engagement, and when consumers have an experience Brand Anthropomorphism, they are likely to enthusiastically use the brand's products and build strong brand-consumer relationships (Lim et al., 2021). Pro-brand behavior is the highest and most effective result to demonstrate the level of consumer engagement with the brand.

In the current research context, smartphones are a product that is considered an extremely necessary and common item. In addition, smartphones are also a product that is always close to users, so it is difficult for customers to choose for themselves a product or a brand that is suitable for them. Even though consumers use this brand instead of a different brand based on the level of attachment between them and the brand, they always tend to use brands that are close, and familiar and give them a sense of belonging. Feeling as comfortable as being next to a loved one. Therefore, the research team proposes the following hypothesis:

H3: Brand Anthropomorphism has a positive effect on Brand Engagement.

2.9. Brand Reputation - Moderator Role

Rai and Diermeier (2015) conclude that brands are perceived by consumers as having a strong personality, and when there is wrongdoing, it can easily damage the Brand Reputation. In addition, Janney and Gove (2011) also assert that when a brand is personified and free of misconduct, the reputation of that brand also receives more positive reviews. Cho et al. (2015) mentioned that Intimacy is a factor that focuses on consumer attitudes. In addition, Ryan and Casidy (2018) determined that Brand Reputation can play a reinforcing and complementary role for consumers when forming their attitudes toward brands. The positive or negative aspects of a brand can have an impact on Brand Reputation, which in turn affects consumers' attitudes

toward the brand and the products associated with the brand (Rindova & Fombrun, 1999).

Besides, reputation is recognized to have a significant impact on several brand assets such as brand image, perceived value, and Brand Engagement (Li & Su, 2018). In addition, some marketing literature shows that a good Brand Reputation can promote customer interaction with the brand (Van Doorn et al., 2010; Walsh et al., 2009). The smartphone market is filled with diverse brands. Therefore, consumers need to choose and use their products based on evaluation and consideration of certain factors. Among those factors, Brand Reputation was one of the important factors during the research team’s discussion. Thereby, the research team put forward the following two hypotheses:

H1a: Brand Reputation moderates the effect of Brand Anthropomorphism on Intimacy toward smartphone brands.

H2a: Brand Reputation moderates the effect of Intimacy on Brand Engagement toward smartphone brands.

2.10. Proposed Research Model

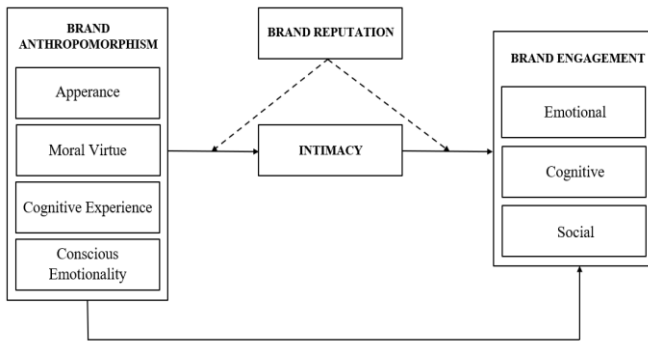


Figure 1: The Proposed Research Model

Based on the theoretical foundations and previous studies that were discussed above, we developed the following research model (see Figure 1).

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Sample and Procedure

This study sampled non-profits. The research team discussed hypotheses and created prototype questionnaires. The English questionnaire was translated into Vietnamese. A qualitative pilot study was followed by a quantitative critical analysis to obtain Vietnamese customer views. The reason why the research team chose the quantitative method is that the quantitative method helps to systematically

investigate the observed events through statistical data, data processing, and accurate conclusions from details and measurements, at the same time, check the relationship between variables in statistical form. Besides, the quantitative method uses structured questionnaires to collect information on a large scale. Information collection is completed through online questionnaires, and the results will provide specific data or information that the research team is looking for.

The study team assessed the question's structure, coherence, content, and responder competence. An impartial party reviewed the questionnaire before interviewing customers to ensure they understood and answered all questions. The committee then examined and refined the questionnaire and considered all dialogue recommendations. The authors also questioned the Vietnam research size. Finally, the questionnaire was revised to eliminate ambiguity and simplify completion. After translating and revising the final set of surveys, the authors developed the questionnaire using Google Forms and distributed it through the Internet to the target audiences. Following data collection, 1,470 responses were obtained. However, only 1,060 replies met the data analysis criteria, including 509 replies from students, 150 replies from self-employed, 186 office workers, 138 housewives, and 77 responders who have other jobs.

3.2. Measurement

Primary survey items were graded on a five-point Likert scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (completely agree) (strongly agree). The questionnaire also had measures, including scales that were operationalized off on previously established research. Nonetheless, a number of changes have been made to reflect the conditions of modern research and its aims.

The main structure of Brand Anthropomorphism (Golossenko et al., 2020) is composed of four elements, including the Appearance of Landwehr and McGill (2011); Cognitive Experience from Kim and McGill (2011); Puzakova et al. (2009); Moral Virtue by Sapontzis (1981) and Conscious Emotionality from Demoulin et al. (2004), Leyens et al. (2001). A night-item scale developed by Cho et al. (2015) was used to measure Intimacy. The Brand Engagement scale comprises third elements including Emotional, Cognitive, and Social developed by Brodie et al. (2011); Hollebeek and Glynn (2014); Vivek et al. (2014). In the end, the Brand Reputation scale was measured by four items by Lau et al. (1999), Veloutsou and Moutinho (2009).

4. Results

4.1. Respondent Profile

Based on the analysis results of the statistical description of the data, we can see that:

In terms of gender, the number of respondents confirming that they are male accounted for 42.7% (453 respondents), female was 39.9% (423 respondents), and respondents choosing another gender was 184 accounted for 17.4% of the total number of respondents. matching words are recorded. Which, the results obtained show that the age of the respondents is mainly Z gene generation (1995 - 2012) accounting for 886 respondents with a rate of 83.6%, respectively followed by Y gene (1980 - 1994), X gene (1965 - 1979) accounted for 15.3% (162 respondents) and 1.1% (12 respondents). This shows that 48.0% are students among the Z gene age group, 17.6% are office workers, 14.2% are self-employed, 13.0% are housewives and 7.3% are from occupations other. Based on the above-collected data, the average income of the research subjects is medium and relatively high, the most common income level of the respondents is 5,000,000 VND to 10,000,000 VND, accounting for 27.8%, 21.1% have income from 10,000,000 VND to 15,000,000 VND, 19.8% have income from 3,000,000 VND to 5,000,000 VND, 17.6% have income below 3,000,000 VND, people with income from 15,000,000 VND or more accounted for 13.6%.

4.2. Measurement Model

Additionally, Henseler et al. (2015) suggested that using heterotrait monotrait correlations (HTMT) is necessary to confirm the discriminant validity of PLS by “comparison of the average variance extracted (based on consistent loadings) with the squared consistent construct correlations.” The result in Table 1 demonstrated that each construct’s Heterotrait Monotrait Ratio was less than 1 (range: 0.049 to 1), indicating high discriminant validity.

All factors have Cronbach's Alpha coefficients over 0.6, indicating suitability. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient = 0.542 < 0.6 (Source: Author's computation) for the factor Appearance (BAA) does not match the standards since there is no smartphone built to seem like a person. Table 2 shows that the study team excluded Appearance from the model. All structures had convergence values of more than 0.5 and composite reliability scores greater than 0.7 (range from 0.759 to 0.905). (Between 0.506 and 0.666). Brand Engagement = 0.584, Cognitive = 0.522, Emotional = 0.666, Social = 0.567, and Intimacy = 0.52. It has great convergent validity. Fornell and Larcker (1981) defined discriminant validity as the square root of the AVE for each latent variable exceeding the correlation coefficients for every other construct.

Table 1: Heterotrait - Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	BA	BACE	BACY	BAM	BE	BEC	BEE	BES	IN
BA									
BACE	0.963								
BACY	1.000	0.593							
BAM	0.896	0.488	0.439						
BE	0.224	0.149	0.172	0.221					
BEC	0.168	0.17	0.122	0.112	0.926				
BEE	0.168	0.136	0.124	0.146	0.893	0.662			
BES	0.214	0.086	0.173	0.259	0.946	0.562	0.526		
IN	0.089	0.049	0.097	0.06	0.251	0.204	0.184	0.232	

Source: Author's calculation

Table 2: Reliability and Convergent Validity

	Cronbach's alpha	rho_A	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted (AVE)
BA	0.833	0.838	0.835	0.507
BACE	0.792	0.796	0.794	0.563
BACY	0.803	0.806	0.803	0.506
BAM	0.756	0.765	0.759	0.514
BE	0.905	0.907	0.905	0.584
BEC	0.812	0.815	0.813	0.522
BEE	0.891	0.889	0.889	0.666
BES	0.884	0.891	0.886	0.567
IN	0.906	0.896	0.891	0.520

Source: Author's calculation

4.3. Mediation Paths Possibility Checking

The P-values in Table 3 are all less than 0.05, which indicates that Intimacy regulates the relationship between Brand Anthropomorphism and consumers' Brand Engagement (which were 0.024 and 0.000, respectively). Brand Anthropomorphism and Intimacy have regression weights of 0.223 and 0.245 on Brand Engagement (Source:

Author's calculation). It was discovered that Brand Anthropomorphism influences Intimacy and Brand Engagement, at the same time Intimacy, also affects Brand Engagement. However, Intimacy has a more significant effect on Brand Engagement than Brand Anthropomorphism, this data shows that Vietnamese consumers have a high degree of engagement with brands they feel intimate with, rather than with brands with a degree of anthropomorphism.

Table 3: The Result of the Mediating Effect

Hypothesis	Relationships	Path coefficients for direct effect	Standard deviation	T statistics	P values	Result
H1	BA --> IN	0.084	0.033	2.252	0.024	Accepted
H2	IN --> BE	0.245	0.033	6.52	0.000	Accepted
H3	BA --> BE	0.223	0.034	5.141	0.000	Accepted

Source: Author's calculation

4.4. Moderation Paths

The moderate factor is Brand Reputation with Cronbach's Alpha coefficient = 0.894 (Source: Author's calculation). According to hypothesis H1a, Brand Reputation modifies the influence of Brand Anthropomorphism on consumer Intimacy with the brand. Table 4 shows that this effect (BA*BR) in IN was statistically significant (P values = 0.048 < 0.05) with a positive regression weight of 0.061.

According to hypothesis H2a, Brand Reputation modifies the effect of Intimacy on consumers' Brand Engagement. Table 4 shows that this effect (IN*BR) in BE is statistically significant (P values = ***) with a positive regression weight of 0.108. The results of the data show that as the Brand Reputation factor increases, at the same time makes the relationship between Brand Anthropomorphism and Intimacy, and the relationship between Intimacy and Brand Engagement also increases.

Table 4: The Result of the Moderating Effect

Hypothesis	Relationship	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P values	Result
H1a	ZBA_m --> ZIN_m	0.068	0.031	2.214	0.027	Accepted
	ZBR_m --> ZIN_m	0.035	0.031	1.134	0.257	
	Int_BA_BR --> ZIN_m	0.061	0.031	1.981	0.048	
H2a	ZIN_m --> ZBE_m	0.219	0.03	7.34	***	Accepted
	ZBR_m --> ZBE_m	-0.001	0.03	-0.036	0.972	
	Int_IN_BR --> ZBE_m	0.108	0.029	3.713	***	

Source: Author's calculation (***) P value significant at level 0.005)

5. Discussion and Implication

Research results show that Intimacy is an intermediate variable between two factors Brand Anthropomorphism and Brand Engagement. This suggests that Intimacy has a strong influence on the engagement behavior between consumers and distribution brands. Therefore, when consumers perceive a brand as personified, they easily form intimate relationships and engage in behaviors associated with that brand. In addition, research also shows that Brand Engagement is influenced by Brand Anthropomorphism. This means that, when consumers perceive that a brand has its personality, morals, perceptions, and emotions, they will build a stronger relationship between them and the brand. In

this way, consumers will have interactive behaviors and convey their positive feelings for the brand to those around them. Besides, the study also found that brand reputation influences the relationship between Brand Anthropomorphism and Intimacy and the relationship between Intimacy and Brand Engagement. This result is completely consistent with previous research by Rai and Diermeier (2015), Ryan and Casidy (2018), and Van Doorn et al. (2010). The study also answered the original research objective of the topic. Research results have shown that Brand Anthropomorphism has a direct effect on Intimacy and indirectly on Brand Engagement, and Intimacy has a direct effect on consumer Brand Engagement. In addition, the results of testing the regulatory role of Brand Reputation in the relationship between the influence of Brand

Anthropomorphism on Intimacy and the influence relationship of Intimacy on Brand Engagement, show that Brand Reputation increases the influence of relationships in the research model. Moreover, another remarkable finding of this study is that in the Vietnamese market, specifically, Ho Chi Minh City, the Brand Anthropomorphism factor in the smartphone brand market consists of only three components rather than the four components previously studied. Specifically, the accepted components are Moral Virtue, Cognitive Experience, and Conscious Emotionality. Therefore, this study contributes to strengthening the concept of Brand Anthropomorphism which is lacking in the theoretical and practical background in the smartphone brand market in Vietnam, specifically Ho Chi Minh City.

To accomplish this purpose, the research team makes the following suggestions: According to the research results, Brand Anthropomorphism is formed from three factors: Moral Virtue, Cognitive Experience, and Conscious Emotionality. So, if you want to enhance Brand Anthropomorphism, the business needs to do the following things: Firstly, to improve Moral Virtue, consumers are willing to abandon the brand if the brand shows signs or is condemned for immoral acts. Therefore, brands need to build their principles and develop products with content and practical values. Brands should closely monitor social activities and create projects that defend and condemn unscrupulous practices. In addition, the image and behavior of the brand must ensure that it does not harm or negatively impact social life, the environment, and related issues. Secondly, to improve the Cognitive Experience, brands need to forecast future needs and come up with appropriate strategies. In addition, consumers and competitors can topple a brand for a variety of reasons, so brands need to build a resilient and argumentative team with a wealth of experience to be able to come up with arguments to help protect the brand against unexpected situations. Thirdly, to increase Conscious Emotionality, people have many different types of emotions, each of which is associated with situations. Therefore, to implement personification, distribution brands must also make their products have “emotions”. To express the emotions and empathy the brand can be based on the needs and problems that customers are facing, the brand must create campaigns and projects with solutions to motivate and encourage customers, support as well as demonstrate the great ability of the product and the brand, in general, to solve problems from customers.

The research results also show that Brand Reputation regulates the relationship between three factors of Brand Anthropomorphism, Intimacy, and Brand Engagement, so businesses need to increase Brand Reputation to achieve intimacy and engagement with consumers. Firstly, businesses should build unique positive advertising messages to help customers remember and create first

impressions with realistic images, and compelling and engaging product stories with a high commitment to quality, features, and design. But if the things that the brand paints in the media do not have a clear effect to make consumers suspicious of the product, it will damage the Brand’s Reputation and bring many consequences. Therefore, the brand can add character to the product, but must not be separated from the reality, performance, and quality that the product delivers. Honesty and transparency are prerequisites for strong consumer trust. Secondly, the quality and performance of smartphone brands must meet or exceed standards set by the tech industry and consumers, as products are widely used in a wide range of situations and different needs. This concerns the safety and experience of consumers, so they are very concerned about the quality and performance of the product. A product component or detail that is considered unsafe or of poor quality can also cause consumers and competitors to rely on it to outpace the brand’s product. In addition, for the products that the brand wants to create a target customer segment, which should rely on the factors of quality and performance to create a product that suits the needs of consumers.

6. Suggestions for Future Research and Limitations

While this research generated some notable results, it is not without limitations. Due to limitations in terms of geographical location, time as well as funding, the research sample is limited in diversity and limited to Ho Chi Minh City. Specifically, the survey approached two main age groups, the Y gene, and the Z gene. Therefore, the research results will not achieve the highest objectivity.

Future studies may consider studying this topic, but in another area, not smartphone brands, to have a more objective view of aspects of this factor Brand Anthropomorphism. In addition, more resources should be invested to expand the scope of the survey (for example, Vietnam), and at the same time increase the survey scale and reach a wide range of appropriate audiences to bring about the same research results more objective and representative research.

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