

The Meaning of Brand Names to Children: A Developmental Investigation

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We explored the way that children use brand names in making consumer judgments. Brand names can serve as a simple perceptual cue that identifies a product as one people are familiar with or one they associate with certain perceptual features. Brands can also be associated with symbolic or conceptual meanings, conveying status, prestige, or trendiness. We proposed that young children relate to brands on a perceptual level, whereas older children relate to brands on a conceptual basis as well. We examined this proposition in an experiment conducted with children 8, 12, and 16 years of age. Participants were asked to evaluate an advertised product (e.g., athletic shoes) with a familiar brand name that was either popular (e.g., Nike®) or less popular (e.g., Kmart®). The advertised product was physically identical in both cases, allowing us to explore whether the brand name had meaning for children apart from its name familiarity or perceptual features. The use of conceptual brand meanings was assessed by asking participants to make several types of brand-related judgments including evaluations of the advertised product, impressions of the owners of the advertised product, and evaluations of possible extensions of the popular brand name advertised. Results indicate that by the time children reach 12 years of age, they use brand names as an important conceptual cue in consumer judgments.

For better or for worse, the marketing barrage has created a generation hypersensitive to the power of brands. For teens, insecure as ever about fitting in, the barrage of brand names offers the irresistible promise of instant cool. (Leonhardt, 1997, pp. 64–65)

Kids this age (8–14 years) desperately need to belong; they believe that having the right “stuff” is the quickest route to acceptance. They spend millions annually at retailers like Limited Too and the Delia’s clothing catalog. They’re very brand conscious. (Kantrowitz & Wingert, 1999, p. 65)

Observations about the rising level of brand consciousness among young consumers are plentiful. This generation of young consumers has been singled out as the most brand conscious ever by virtue of the depth and breadth of their brand knowledge and preferences. Articles in the business and pop-

ular press describe children and teenagers as being devoted disciples of particular brand names, such as Gap®, Nike®, and Abercrombie & Fitch® (Leonhardt, 1997; Zinn, 1994). Children are also characterized as becoming brand conscious at much earlier ages, precipitating the opening of stores such as Limited Too® and Abercrombie Kids® so that the younger set can purchase the same brands available to teens (Edgecliffe-Johnson, 1999).

These observations have given rise to several initiatives to curb the level of brand consciousness among children and teens. Perhaps the most publicized move in this direction has been the institution of school uniforms intended to reduce the brand competition in clothing among students (Jamison, 1996). Dress codes that specify clothing without brand names and logos have also been put into place in some schools, with prohibitions against particular items such as Starter® jackets with logos of NFL and NBA teams. School boards have started to question and in some cases ban the use of corporate-sponsored teaching materials that feature posters, notebooks, and advertisements with prominent brand names. Just recently, for

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example, the San Francisco School Board passed a resolution to ban textbooks and teaching materials that unnecessarily mention brand names (Seyfer, 1999).

Considering the growing importance of this topic, it is surprising that basic research on the importance and meaning of brand names to children is so sparse. To date, we know that children recognize brand names at an early age, as young as 3 or 4 years of age, and that brand recognition and recall increases as children grow older. By the time children reach middle childhood, approximately 7 to 8 years of age, they can name multiple brands in many product categories such as cereals, snacks, and toys (McNeal, 1992; Rossiter, 1976; Rubin, 1974; Ward, Wackman, & Wartella, 1977); mention brand names as an important type of product information (Ward et al., 1977); and often request products by brand name (Otnes, Kim, & Kim, 1994). These findings lend support to the contention that brands are important to children and suggest that brands become more important cues as children grow older.

Missing, however, is an understanding of what brand names mean to children and how this influences the use of brand names in making consumer judgments. Brand names can serve as a simple perceptual cue that identifies a product as one people are familiar with or one they associate with certain perceptual features. For example, the Abercrombie & Fitch brand is a familiar one, which might be associated with clothes that have simple designs, muted colors, and comfortable cotton fabrics. Brands can also be associated with conceptual or symbolic meanings, conveying status, prestige, and "coolness." The Abercrombie & Fitch brand symbolizes a "preppie" lifestyle, accompanied by money, prep school, and sports such as lacrosse and rugby. When an 8-year-old asks for an Abercrombie & Fitch shirt, is it familiarity with the brand, perceptual product features, or conceptual meanings that drive the request? If an identical shirt were available in the same style and color but without the Abercrombie & Fitch label, would this be just as acceptable? Is it possible that the substitute shirt would be acceptable to an 8-year-old child but not to a 12-year-old child? These questions cannot be answered without knowing more about what brands mean to children and how these brand meanings are used in forming preferences and making choices.

In this article, we take a first step in this direction by asking a basic question: At what age do children use conceptual brand meanings to make consumer judgments? We propose that children of different ages relate to brand names in different ways, with younger children more attuned to brands on a perceptual level, serving as a cue for products with familiar names and perceptual features. At some point, conceptual meanings become salient, which further increases the importance of brand names for an even wider array of consumer judgments. Brand names can now be used for evaluating more than just a discrete physical product; brand names might be used for judging an entire line of branded products or inferring the personality characteristics of consumers owning a particular brand.

To explore this line of thinking, we begin by describing research in child psychology that sheds light on why conceptual brand meanings may be more prevalent as children grow older. Based on this material, we present hypotheses linking the use of conceptual brand meanings to age and product experience. Next, we examine these propositions in an experiment conducted with children 8 to 16 years of age. Participants were asked to evaluate an advertised product (e.g., athletic shoes) with a familiar brand name that was either popular (e.g., Nike) or less popular (e.g., Kmart). The advertised product was physically identical in both cases, allowing us to explore whether the brand name had meaning for the children apart from its name familiarity or physical features. The use of conceptual brand meanings was assessed by asking participants to make several types of brand-related judgments, including evaluations of the advertised product, impressions of the owners of the advertised product, and evaluations of possible extensions of the popular brand name being advertised.

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

Understanding brands at a conceptual level and using these meanings in the process of making consumer judgments and decisions is clearly an important part of consumer socialization in children (John, 1999). Although prior research is silent on this topic, research in child development offers a wide array of findings that can provide insight into children's growing sophistication about brands. We summarize several areas of this research following using findings from child development to identify the age(s) at which children are likely to develop conceptual brand meanings and incorporate them into consumer judgments.

Development of Conceptual Brand Meanings

Our analysis begins by considering the types of abilities children would need to possess to think about brands on a conceptual level. First, children need to recognize brand names as a way to identify a specific product within a product category. Second, children must recognize a brand name as a unique and separate element of the product, distinct from the packaging or the product itself. That is, children must be able to decompose a given product into separate and distinct dimensions, viewing brand name as one of those separable elements. Third, once children are able to recognize a brand as a separable product element, they must be able to think about the brand name at an abstract level, connecting the brand name to nonobservable features or associations such as quality, prestige, or trendiness.

A closer look at each of these prerequisites yields some interesting developmental trends. Taking the first prerequisite, the evidence indicates that children can recognize familiar brand names and brand characters at an early age, at least

by 3 or 4 years of age (Derscheid, Kwon, & Fang, 1996; Haynes, Burts, Dukes, & Cloud, 1993). At this time, children's awareness of brands is typically developed enough that they even request products by brand names, such as McDonald's®, M&M's®, and Oreos®. However, children this young may not always use brand names to refer to a specific product but may be using it in a generic way to refer to a product category (John, 1997). For example, a child's request for Oreos may simply be a request for any chocolate, creme-filled cookie, which could be satisfied by a number of brands (e.g., Hydrox®, Healthy Choice®). Preschoolers are especially prone to this approach given the fact that brand names (e.g., Oreos) are far more accessible and easier to learn than are product class names (e.g., sandwich cookies). Discrimination of brands within a product category is more assured as soon as children reach school age.

Once children identify brand names with specific products, they must go one step further and recognize that a brand name is a separate element or attribute of the product, distinct from the packaging or the product itself. The ability to decompose and think about an object such as a product in terms of individual attributes has been addressed in research examining children's ability to classify objects based on individual attributes ("dimensional identity") versus overall similarity. Findings from this line of investigation indicate that children younger than 6 tend to classify objects based on overall similarity, whereas older children are more inclined to classify objects by their identity on a single dimension or attribute (Kemler, 1983; Medin & Smith, 1984; Smith, 1983, 1989). Note that the exact age at which this transition occurs can depend on the magnitude of dimensional differences within the classification task. In general, though, this line of research suggests that the ability to relate to brands as a separable dimension of a product should be in place by the time they enter first grade.

Third, once children recognize brand names as a separable product element, they must be able to think about the brand at an abstract level, apart from the readily observable and concrete features of the product. Evidence from child development research suggests that children develop abilities to think about and classify products at a conceptual level throughout early childhood. The traditional view, characterized by Piaget's theory of cognitive development, holds that younger children at the preoperational stage (ages 2 to 7) rely on readily observable aspects of their environment, such as concrete perceptual features, with more abstract thinking emerging as children enter the next stage of development, the concrete operational stage (ages 7 to 11; Ginsburg & Opper, 1988). More contemporary views suggest that children can reason and categorize objects on a conceptual basis much earlier, with some demonstrations as early as 18 months of age (Carey, 1985; Gelman & Coley, 1990; Mandler, Bauer, & McDonough, 1991). However, even this research suggests that children tend not to classify objects conceptually on a regular and unaided basis until early elementary school

(Gelman & Markman, 1986; Keil, 1986; Rips, 1975). Similar findings have been reported for product categories, with children 4 to 7 years of age using perceptual cues (shape, package color) to classify products, whereas older children (8 to 10 years) used nonobservable conceptual cues (taste) as a basis for classifying products (John & Sujana, 1990).

Merging the evidence for each prerequisite provides several insights into children's abilities to relate to brands on a conceptual level. To begin, it is clear that the basic abilities enabling a child to think about brands on a conceptual level develop throughout early childhood. As children grow older, they identify brand names with specific products, view brand names as a separate product feature, and think about brand names as something more than a perceptual feature or component of a product. Mastery of these prerequisites varies slightly by age, but a conservative view would be that most children should begin to think about brands on a conceptual level by the time they are 8 years old. This prediction is consistent with prior research in consumer socialization in which the transition from concrete to abstract thinking in consumer settings is often pegged at 7 to 8 years of age (e.g., John, 1999; Moschis, 1987; Ward et al., 1977). Of course, further development is likely to take place as children move into late childhood (10 to 12 years), with increasing abilities to think abstractly about brands and a growing understanding of the social context within which consumption takes place (John, 1999).

Incorporating Conceptual Brand Meanings into Consumer Judgments

Once children begin to think about brands conceptually, the stage is set for incorporating these meanings into a wide range of consumer judgments. However, incorporating conceptual brand meanings into the judgment process involves additional cognitive abilities related to attention and retrieval. Key among them is the ability to focus one's attention away from the visually salient perceptual properties of stimuli to allow a consideration of stored brand meanings relevant to the task. Also implicated is the ability to retrieve conceptual brand meanings from memory so they may be considered in the process of making judgments.

These abilities are unlikely to surface on a reliable basis until late childhood, approximately 10 to 12 years of age. Attention and encoding of information are driven by perceptual salience in children until they reach the age of 6 or 7 years (e.g., Rothman & Potts, 1977; Vurpillot, 1968), but even older children can find it difficult to ignore perceptually salient information in a judgment or decision-making task (Davidson, 1991a, 1991b). Retrieval processes are under considerable development in middle and late childhood as well, with children under the age of 10 or 11 still unable to use retrieval cues in an effective way to search memory unless they are given additional prompts and guidance (e.g., Bjorklund, 1990; Emmerich & Ackerman, 1978;

Kobasigawa, 1974). Abstract cues, such as conceptual brand meanings, are not readily observable during the judgment task and must be retrieved from memory if they are to be available during the judgment process. Younger children may have more brand knowledge and meanings stored in memory than they are able to effectively access in subsequent judgment tasks. For example, in a marketing setting, Brucks, Armstrong, and Goldberg (1988) found that 9- to 10-year-olds with a considerable amount of knowledge about advertising's persuasive intent and deceptive techniques failed to utilize this knowledge when evaluating commercial messages unless prompted to do so.

Added to these cognitive factors, which facilitate the retrieval and attention to stored brand meanings, are trends in social development that increase the salience of conceptual brand meanings pertaining to social status, prestige, and group affiliation. Impressive gains in social development occur between the ages of 6 and 12, with children becoming more adept at forming impressions based on nonperceptual or nonphysical cues (Barenboim, 1981) and understanding the world through other people's perspectives (Selman, 1980). These developments lead to a greater understanding of the meanings other people place on owning certain products and brands as well as a new-found awareness that people are often judged by attributes that are more symbolic in nature, such as the brands they wear or own. Brands become associated with being "cool" or being part of a particular social group, such as "preppies" or "hip hops" (Jamison, 1996). By late childhood, social meanings attached to brands are more salient to children because they understand their implications for impression formation and impression management. This in turn increases the probability that conceptual brand meanings related to social status, prestige, and group affiliation would be incorporated into children's consumer judgments.

The picture emerging from these trends in cognitive and social development is that conceptual brand meanings are more likely to be accessed and used in the process of making consumer judgments as children move into late childhood, approximately 10 to 12 years of age. Developments in cognitive abilities and social understanding set the stage for children to think about brands conceptually and to use these conceptual meanings as important input into their consumer judgments. With this background in mind, we forward the following hypothesis:

- H1: Children possess conceptual brand meanings and incorporate them into consumer judgments by the time they reach late childhood, approximately 10 to 12 years of age.

Role of Product Experience

Thus far we have explained the emergence of conceptual brand meanings in terms of age-related trends in cognitive and social development. Although we focus our attention on these devel-

opments, we explore an alternative viewpoint based on age-related differences in product experience as well. According to this view, children become more attuned to the conceptual and social meanings of consumption stimuli (products and brands) as they grow older because they accumulate more experience and have more opportunities to see the product being used in a social context (e.g., see Belk, Mayer, & Driscoll, 1984). As children see the product being used in certain situations or by certain types of people, they learn the social meanings associated with products (or brands).

Clearly, some level of experience is required to provide the "raw material" for the development of conceptual meanings about brands as well as products. However, according to this line of reasoning, older children have a distinct advantage primarily because they have a higher level of product familiarity and experience, not because they have more advanced cognitive skills. Our view is that age-related developments in cognitive and social skills, which occur by late childhood (10 to 12 years of age), are necessary to sculpt these product experiences into brand meanings. We would expect to see differences between younger (under 10 to 12 years) and older (10 to 12 years and older) children even if one were to account for varying levels of product experience across age levels. Thus, we propose the following:

- H2: Age differences in the use of conceptual brand meanings will remain after accounting for age-related differences in product experience.

METHOD

Sample

Two hundred and two children were recruited from a school district in a small Midwestern town situated near a major metropolitan area. Fifty-two children were 8-year-olds (25 boys, 27 girls), 80 were 12-year-olds (32 boys, 47 girls, 1 gender not identified), and 70 were 16-year-olds (33 boys, 37 girls). Parental permission was obtained for each participant.

Overview

Participants were shown ads for jeans or athletic shoes, which included a picture of the product with a familiar brand name that was either preferred (e.g., Nike) or nonpreferred (e.g., Kmart). For example, one group of participants saw an advertisement for a pair of jeans with a Levi brand name; a different group of participants saw an advertisement for the same jeans with a Kmart brand name (see Figure 1). In both cases, the advertised product shown was physically identical in all respects, which allowed us to explore whether the brand names had meaning for the children beyond simply being familiar or having a certain physical appearance.



FIGURE 1 Example of experimental stimuli.

After viewing the advertisement, children were asked for several evaluative responses. First, they were asked to evaluate the advertised product by agreeing or disagreeing with a set of statements about the product (e.g., “The jeans in the ad are neat looking.”). Second, children were asked to give their impressions of someone who would own the advertised product, such as being “cool” or “popular.” Because the advertised products were perceptually identical and had familiar brand names, we expected to see a difference in product evaluations and owner impressions based on brand name (Nike vs. Kmart) only for children incorporating conceptual brand meanings into their judgments (12- and 16-year-olds). No differences in evaluations and impressions were expected for 8-year-olds in the study.

Next came the final set of brand-related evaluations. Here, children were given a list of possible brand extensions for each preferred brand (Nike and Levi) and asked to evaluate whether they would like them. Several brand extensions were congruent with the parent brand image (e.g., Nike hiking boots) and several were incongruent (e.g., Nike shampoo). We expected to see more positive evaluations of extensions that fit the parent brand (e.g., Nike hiking boots) versus those that did not (e.g., Nike shampoo) but only for children incorporating conceptual brand meanings into their judgments (12- and 16-year-olds). Once again, no differences in evaluations were expected for 8-year-olds.

Independent Variables

Three independent variables were incorporated into a 3 (age: 8, 12, 16 years) \times 2 (product category: athletic shoes, jeans) \times 2 (brand: preferred, nonpreferred) mixed design. Age and

brand were between-subject factors and product category was a within-subjects factor. Each child saw two print advertisements, one for athletic shoes and one for jeans, with the order of presentation and brand names counterbalanced across participants.

Age. Three age groups—8-, 12-, and 16-year-olds—were selected to capture the emergence and use of conceptual brand meanings in children. Based on our earlier discussion of cognitive abilities, 8-year-olds were considered to be the youngest children who might have enough of the necessary skills in place to think about brand names on a conceptual level. However, we proposed that conceptual brand meanings are not incorporated into judgments until much later, around 10 to 12 years of age. To ensure proper representation from this age group, we included 12-year-olds as participants. Sixteen-year-olds were included to ensure that we would have at least one age group who would have more sophisticated brand meanings and would incorporate them into the types of consumer judgments under study.

Product category. Two product categories, athletic shoes and jeans, were included to assess the robustness of findings and allow more than one popular brand name to be examined. These products were selected with several guidelines in mind. First, children of all ages should have a minimal amount of familiarity with the product. To provide evidence to this effect, 45 children between the ages of 7 and 17 were asked to list as many brand names as possible for 16 different product categories: cars, motorcycles, bikes, stereos, TVs, computers, video game systems, cameras, skates, snow skis, shampoo, bar soap, toothpaste, breakfast cereal, jeans,

and athletic shoes. Only 9 of the 16 categories had acceptable levels of familiarity, with a minimum of 90% of all children and 80% of the youngest children able to name at least one brand in the following categories: cars, video game systems, computers, athletic shoes, jeans, shampoo, bar soap, toothpaste, and cereal.

At this point, consideration was given to which products would be most conducive to associations or impressions about the individuals who own or use certain brands. Shampoo, bar soap, toothpaste, and breakfast cereal were eliminated given the unlikely presence of brand-related associations for owners or users of these products, subsequently verified in a pretest with 43 adults asked about their product-related associations (e.g., quality) and owner-related associations (e.g., popular, wealthy) about brands from these categories. Using this data, cars also were eliminated from further consideration due to the fact that most children referred to brand names by manufacturer (e.g., Chrysler), whereas most brand-related associations occurred at the car model (e.g., Neon, Corvette) level.

The remaining product categories—athletic shoes, jeans, video game systems, and computers—were examined further to select the two best options for the study. The final pretest (described following) identified athletic shoes and jeans as the best categories in terms of having well-known brands varying in preference as well as having sufficient variance in product experience levels needed to test our prediction about the impact of product experience on age differences in the use of conceptual brand meanings.

Brands. Two brand names were required for each product category: a preferred and a nonpreferred brand.¹ To select brands and provide further testing regarding the product categories of interest, 192 children aged 7 to 17 were asked a series of questions about product experience and brand preference. To assess product experience, a scale composed of two equally weighted components, direct/indirect experience and familiarity with brands in the product category, was used. To measure direct/indirect experience, children responded to four questions asking them how often they wore or used the product (*everyday, most days, once in a while, never*), how many items of the product they owned (*none, 1, 2, 3 or more*), how often they had seen advertisements for the product (*never, a few times, pretty often, lots of times*), and how often they had gone shopping for the product (*never, a few times, pretty often, lots of times*). These items were fashioned after similar ones used as indicators of product experience and knowledge in prior research (Bettman & Park, 1980; Bettman & Sujar, 1987; Johnson & Russo, 1984).

Familiarity with brands in the category was assessed using a recognition task modeled after Brucks (1985). Children were shown a list of brands for the product category, with eight legitimate brand names and four decoys. To provide a more challenging task, three of the decoys were legitimate brands but not for the product category of interest, and one was a fictitious brand name. Children were asked to circle all the brand names they could recognize from the category. Scores were calculated as the number of correct brands circled minus the number of decoy brands circled.

Several decisions were made on the basis of these data. First, of the product categories tested, computers and video game systems had the lowest experience scores and were dropped from further consideration. Second, athletic shoes and jeans were confirmed as reasonable product choices, with higher average experience score percentages and greater variance in product experience than computers and video game systems. The analysis did, however, point to one important fact about athletic shoes and jeans. In general, boys had more experience than girls with athletic shoes (64% vs. 54% of maximum experience points), whereas girls had more experience than boys with jeans (65% vs. 55% of maximum experience points). Both categories were selected for study, which allowed us to examine another source of variation in product experience (other than age) and its effect on the use of conceptual brand meanings.

Finally, these data also suggested acceptable brands in terms of brand awareness and preference across age groups. Particular attention was placed on selecting brand names viewed similarly across age groups because the existence of age differences in how much a brand name was recognized or liked could provide an alternative explanation for the source of age differences. In terms of brand awareness, more than 90% of pretest participants in all age groups were aware of Nike, Reebok®, and LA Gear® athletic shoes; for jeans, only the Levi brand name exhibited such awareness levels, with at least 80% of children in even the youngest age group recognizing the brand.

Data regarding children's preferences supported the choice of Nike and Levi as the preferred brands for the athletic shoe and jeans category, respectively. Brand preferences were assessed by asking children to respond to statements (e.g., "I like [brand]"; "I would like to wear [brand]") on a 4-point scale: 4 (*YES*), 3 (*yes*), 2 (*no*), and 1 (*NO*). Preference scores ranged from 4 to 16, with higher scores indicating more positive evaluations. Using this measure, Nike was the most preferred brand of athletic shoe (average score of 14.0), and Kmart was the least preferred (average score of 8.3), with no age differences in preference scores for either brand. For jeans, both Levi (average score of 13.6) and Girbaud® (average score of 13.5) were well liked, with no age differences in preferences for either brand. Interestingly, less preferred brands in both categories, such as LA Gear and Wrangler®, were the only brands to show significant age differences. Based on these results, Nike and Levi were selected as pre-

¹We also attempted to identify a neutral hypothetical brand name that could be used across product categories. We were unable to do so for the youngest children in the study who tended to evaluate hypothetical brand names in a slightly positive, rather than neutral, manner.

ferred brands, with Kmart selected as the nonpreferred brand for both athletic shoes and jeans.

Dependent Variables

Predictions regarding the use of conceptual brand meanings were tested by examining children's responses to the fictitious advertisements, which pictured the same product (athletic shoes, jeans) with different brand names (Nike, Levi, Kmart). Children responded to questions about product evaluations, owner impressions, and brand extension evaluations.

Product evaluation. Children evaluated the product shown in the advertisement using a six-item, 4-point scale ranging +2 (*YES*), +1 (*yes*), -1 (*no*), and -2 (*NO*), similar to ones used successfully with children in previous research (e.g., Roedder, Sternthal, & Calder, 1983; Rossiter, 1977). Participants responded to statements about the product (e.g., "The jeans in the ad are neat looking") by circling an uppercase *YES* or lowercase *yes* if they strongly or slightly agreed with the statement and an uppercase *NO* or lowercase *no* if they disagreed with the statement. Included in the set of six items were statements about the product's appearance, quality, price, prestige, favorableness, and preference for owning.

Owner impressions. Impressions of owners of the advertised product were measured using a four-item, 5-point scale ranging +2 (*YES*), +1 (*yes*), -1 (*no*), -2 (*NO*), and 0 (?). Children indicated their degree of agreement or disagreement with statements about owners of the product (e.g., "A person who owns the jeans in the advertisement probably has a lot of friends") by circling *YES* or *yes* if they agreed and *NO* or *no* if they disagreed, as before. A question mark ("?") was made available as a fifth response to cover the possibility that children may be unable or unwilling to draw such inferences on the basis of brand ownership alone. Included in the set of four items were statements about the owner's appearance, wealth, popularity, and friends. These dimensions were chosen from a list of 10, all used successfully in researching consumption symbolism in children (e.g., Belk, Bahn, & Mayer, 1982). Other dimensions used in this research were eliminated from consideration here because they did not have a clear positive or negative connotation (e.g., age, gender) or were not strongly associated with brands of athletic shoes or jeans (e.g., smart).

Brand extension evaluation. Children were given a list of five possible brand extensions for each preferred brand, Nike and Levi, and asked to evaluate whether they would like them. The brand extension scale was a dichotomous *yes-no* scale, which children used to respond to statements such as "I think I would like Nike shampoo" and "I think I would like Nike hiking boots." Some of the brand extensions were congruent and some were incongruent with the brand's image. The positive affect associated with both brand

names was expected to transfer to congruent extensions fitting the parent brand image; this was not expected to be the case for incongruent extensions that did not fit with the preferred brand's image. Brand extensions for the nonpreferred brand (Kmart) were not included due to the difficulty in interpreting whether a negative reaction was due to a poor fit with the brand image or due to a simple transfer of affect from the negatively evaluated brand name.

Congruent and incongruent brand extensions were selected on the basis of two pretests conducted with a total of 54 adults. Adults were selected as a baseline sample due to the fact that they possess well-developed images for brands such as Nike and Levi, enabling them to evaluate extensions on the basis of fit with such brand images. Participants were given a set of possible brand extensions for Nike and Levi and were asked to evaluate them on scales similar to those described previously. Congruent (incongruent) brand extensions were selected from those receiving highly favorable (unfavorable) evaluations. The incongruent extensions—shampoo, cereal, and stereo/television—were held constant across the Nike and Levi brands. Less than 10% of the second pretest sample evaluated these extensions positively. Congruent extensions included T-shirts and hiking boots for the Nike brand and shorts and belts for the Levi brand. More than 70% of the second pretest sample evaluated these extensions positively.

Children's score on the brand extension measure was calculated by giving them 1 point for each extension evaluation (*yes* or *no*) that matched the typical answer from the adult sample. Thus, participants received 1 point for evaluating a congruent brand extension positively and for evaluating an incongruent brand extension negatively. This resulted in a scale with possible scores ranging from 0 to 5 for Nike and 0 to 5 for Levi.

RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses

Reliability analyses. Reliability analyses were conducted for the product evaluation and owner impression scales as a first step. As described earlier, the product evaluation measure consisted of six items, with children responding on a 4-point scale in which individual items were scored as +2 (*YES*), +1 (*yes*), -1 (*no*), and -2 (*NO*), with higher scores indicating more positive evaluations. The results of a reliability analysis indicated coefficient alphas in acceptable range for both jeans (.84) and athletic shoes (.81). Additionally, factor analysis of the six-item scale for both jeans and athletic shoes revealed all items loading on one factor, providing evidence of the unidimensionality of the scale.

A similar analysis was conducted for the owner impressions measure. As described earlier, this measure consisted of four items, with children responding on a 5-point scale in

TABLE 1
Product Evaluations and Owner Impressions

Age by Brand	Jeans						Athletic Shoes					
	Product Evaluation			Owner Impressions			Product Evaluation			Owner Impressions		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
Age 8												
Preferred brand	0.30	1.23	24	0.16	1.25	23	0.89	0.98	27	0.56	1.04	28
Nonpreferred brand	0.46	1.17	27	0.13	1.04	28	0.86	1.07	22	0.39	1.25	22
Age 12												
Preferred brand	1.10	0.75	40	0.38	1.15	39	0.88	1.01	39	0.12	1.07	38
Nonpreferred brand	0.05	1.27	40	-0.49	1.14	39	0.09	1.08	41	-0.17	1.09	41
Age 16												
Preferred brand	1.19	0.48	35	0.60	0.93	33	0.41	0.81	35	0.39	0.88	35
Nonpreferred brand	-0.13	1.10	35	-0.34	0.94	35	-0.29	0.92	33	0.08	1.01	35

which items were scored as +2 (*YES*), +1 (*yes*), -1 (*no*), and -2 (*NO*), with a ? scored as 0. The results of a reliability analysis indicated coefficient alphas in the acceptable range for both jeans (.84) and athletic shoes (.77). Analyses of these scales using factor analysis provided evidence of unidimensionality, with all four items for each product loading on a single factor.

Gender effects. Gender was examined as a possible influence on children's responses. This analysis was precipitated by the fact that gender differences emerged in the extent of product experience for the focal product categories of jeans and athletic shoes. Gender was entered as a covariate in the analyses of variance (ANOVAs) performed for each dependent variable (see descriptions following). Although the gender covariate was significant in one of the analyses (product evaluations for athletic shoes; $p < .05$), the results for the independent variables of interest were not affected. There were no substantial differences in the significance levels for the main effects of age or brand (preferred vs. nonpreferred), nor their interaction, when analyses with and without the gender covariate were compared. Given these findings, gender differences were not pursued in further analyses.

Hypothesis One

Our first prediction was that conceptual brand meanings would emerge and be incorporated into consumer judgments by the time children reach 10 to 12 years of age. Considering the age groups we studied—8, 12, and 16 years—our expectation was that the two older age groups would differ from the youngest age group in their evaluation of products, owner impressions, and brand extension evaluations. We describe the mode of analysis and results in detail following.

Product evaluations. Recall that children in each age group evaluated an advertised product that was identical in physical appearance but was labeled using either a preferred

(Nike/Levi) or nonpreferred (Kmart) brand. This setup was replicated in two different product categories: jeans and athletic shoes. Children using conceptual brand meanings were expected to evaluate the product with the preferred brand name higher than the same physical product with a nonpreferred brand name. Given our predictions, this comparison was expected to be significant for 12- and 16-year-olds, but not for 8-year-olds. Although participants of all ages had a similar level of awareness and stated preference for both brands, younger children were expected to judge the advertised product on the basis of physical appearance or brand familiarity rather than on the basis of abstract or symbolic brand meanings.

Means and standard deviations for product evaluations by age, brand name, and product category are provided in Table 1.² A brief examination reveals that the 8-year-olds appeared to evaluate the advertised products with preferred and nonpreferred brands equally, whereas the 12- and 16-year-olds had higher evaluations of the item with a preferred brand name and lower evaluations of the item with the nonpreferred brand name. In addition, the 12- and 16-year-olds did not appear to be much different in their product evaluations.

These age differences were examined in more detail in a 3 (age: 8, 12, 16 years) \times 2 (brand name: Nike/Levi, Kmart) between-subject ANOVA.³ Separate ANOVAs were run for the two product classes, athletic shoes and jeans, given the possibility that participants might have a lot of experience with one product category but very little with the second product

²Respondents failing to provide answers for every item in a scale—product evaluation, owner impressions, or extension evaluation—were deleted from the analysis for that particular scale (but not all analyses). This resulted in minor variations in *ns* across dependent measures within experimental treatments, as seen in Tables 1 and 3.

³Given minor variations in cell sizes, all ANOVAs were performed using Type 3 sum of squares. Due to moderate correlations between dependent variables, the effects of interest were also tested using multivariate ANOVAs. Results from both analyses were consistent.

TABLE 2
T Values for Planned Contrasts Between Preferred and Nonpreferred Brands

Age	Jeans		Athletic Shoes	
	Product Evaluation	Owner Impressions	Product Evaluation	Owner Impressions
8	-0.47	0.09	0.09	0.54
12	4.52*	3.33*	3.41*	1.19
16	6.51*	4.13*	3.35*	1.35

* $p \leq .01$.

category. Although product experience effects were not the focus here, the design needed to incorporate these considerations to provide a consistent approach for testing both the first and second hypothesis, which does address the influence of product experience.

Initial support for our prediction was signaled by a significant Age \times Brand Name interaction for jeans, $F(2, 190) = 9.04, p < .01$, and a marginally significant interaction for athletic shoes, $F(2, 190) = 2.46, p = .09$.⁴ Thus, differences in the evaluations of items with preferred and nonpreferred brand names varied by age. Stronger support was sought by performing a series of contrasts between the preferred and nonpreferred brand conditions for each age group (see Table 2). As predicted, evaluations of the advertised product with preferred and nonpreferred brand names did not vary among 8-year-olds for either jeans or athletic shoes. Among older children, differences between preferred and nonpreferred branded items were significant as expected for both jeans and athletic shoes (see Figure 2). It appears that the youngest children did not use conceptual brand meanings as a basis for their product evaluations, whereas both 12- and 16-year-olds actively did so.

One additional finding of interest was an age-related trend in the way participants evaluated the nonpreferred branded item. Looking across both product categories, one sees a movement from slightly positive evaluations for 8-year-olds to slightly negative evaluations for 16-year-olds. To explore this trend further, each child's product evaluation was categorized as either positive (greater than 0) or negative (less than or equal to 0). The results are consistent with the pattern noted previously for group mean evaluations. The majority of 8-year-olds (73%) evaluated Kmart athletic shoes favorably; in contrast, only 56% of 12-year-olds and 33% of 16-year-olds did so. Similarly, the majority of 8-year-olds (63%) evaluated Kmart jeans favorably; only 50% of 12-year-olds and 43% of 16-year-olds did so. Although evaluations of the preferred branded item showed similar gains in some cases, the formation of negative brand meanings seems particularly noteworthy as children move from middle childhood into early adolescence.

Owner impressions. Children also responded to the advertised products by indicating their impression of the owners of these products on traits such as popularity and attractiveness. Participants using conceptual brand meanings were expected to evaluate the owners of items with a preferred brand higher than the owners of the same physical product with a nonpreferred brand name. Given our hypothesis, the comparison between owners of the preferred and nonpreferred branded items was expected to be significant for 12- and 16-year-olds, but not for 8-year-olds.

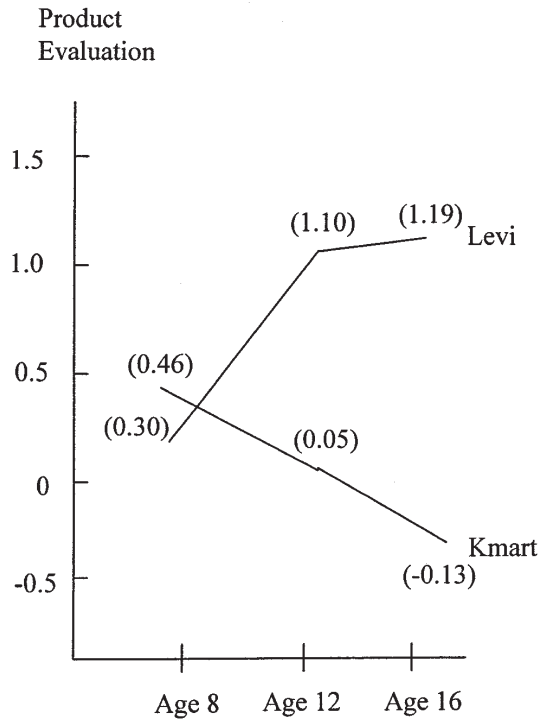
Means and standard deviations for owner impressions by age, brand name, and product category are provided in Table 1. It appears that 8-year-olds evaluated the owners of preferred and nonpreferred brands more similarly than did older children. These age differences were examined in more detail in a 3 (age: 8, 12, 16 years) \times 2 (brand name: Nike/Levi, Kmart) between-subject ANOVA. Once again, separate ANOVAs were run for each product category, athletic shoes and jeans. The results provided mixed support for our prediction, with a marginally significant Age \times Brand Name interaction for jeans, $F(2, 190) = 2.89, p = .06$, but not for athletic shoes, $F < 1$.⁵

Contrasts between the preferred and nonpreferred brand conditions for each age group provided a clear picture (see Table 2). As predicted, the impressions of owners of the preferred and nonpreferred brand did not vary among 8-year-olds, either for jeans or athletic shoes. Among older children, differences between owners of preferred and nonpreferred branded items were significant as expected for jeans, but not for athletic shoes (see Figure 3). These results provide further evidence that 8-year-olds in the study did not use conceptual brand meanings as a basis for owner impressions, whereas both 12- and 16-year-olds had more of a tendency to do so.

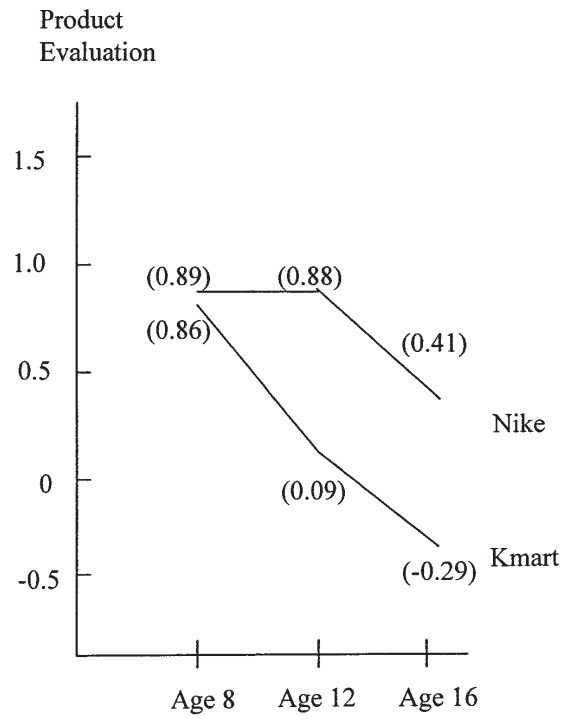
The significant difference between preferred and nonpreferred brands of jeans deserves further comment. This difference appears to be the result of increasingly negative evaluations of nonpreferred brand owners as well as increasingly positive evaluations of preferred brand owners

⁴The age, $F(2, 190) = 9.25, p < .01$, and brand, $F(1, 190) = 16.15, p < .01$, main effects were also significant for the athletic shoe category; the brand main effect, $F(1, 190) = 30.76, p < .01$, was significant for the jeans category.

⁵The age, $F(2, 190) = 3.59, p = .03$, and brand, $F(1, 190) = 3.30, p = .07$, main effects were significant for the athletic shoe category; the brand main effect, $F(1, 190) = 19.73, p < .01$, was significant for the jeans category. Other main effects did not reach significance. There were also no significant effects of order of presentation.

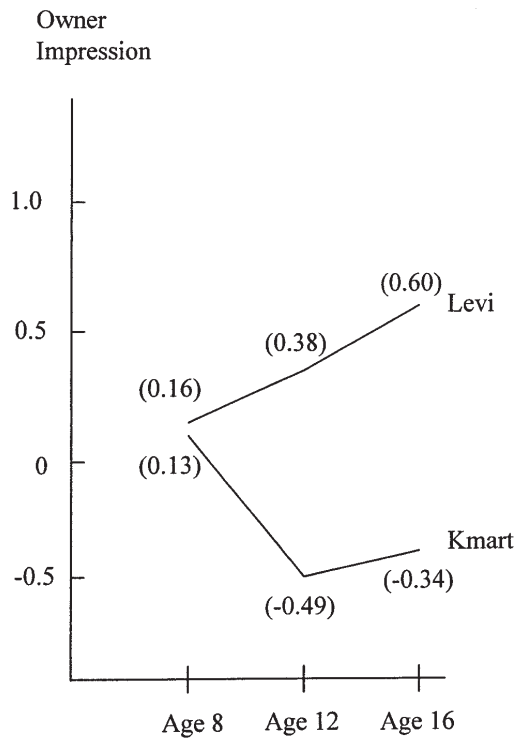


A. Jeans

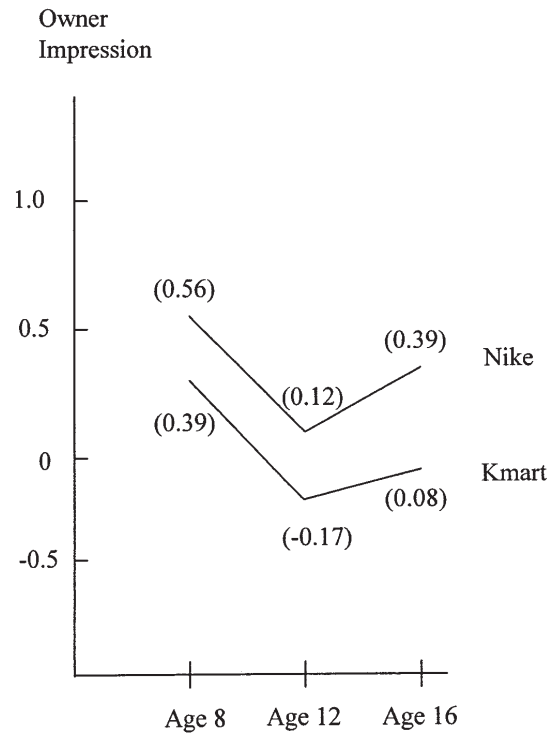


B. Athletic Shoes

FIGURE 2 Product evaluations by age and brand name.



A. Jeans



B. Athletic Shoes

FIGURE 3 Owner impressions by age and brand name.

on the part of older participants. To explore this trend further, each child's owner impression score for the nonpreferred brand was categorized as either positive (greater than 0) or negative (less than 0). The majority of 8-year-olds (61%) evaluated owners of Kmart jeans favorably; in contrast, only 26% of 12-year-olds and 23% of 16-year-olds did so. This trend is similar to one for product evaluations, with negative brand meanings contributing heavily to differences between 8-year-olds and 12- to 16-year-olds.

Brand extension evaluations. We hypothesized that children make an important transition in their understanding of brands by age 10 to 12. If this is the case, these children should also have a more mature basis for evaluating potential brand extensions, discriminating between those that fit versus those that do not fit the parent brand image, and competencies. Thus, our expectation was that 12- and 16-year-olds would be better at evaluating potential brand extensions of a well-known brand than would 8-year-olds.

These expectations were borne out by analyses of the brand extension evaluations for the two preferred brands, Nike and Levi (see Table 3 for means and standard deviations). Recall that extension evaluations for Nike and Levi were completed by all participants, regardless of the experimental conditions (Nike athletic shoes, Kmart athletic shoes, Levi jeans, Kmart jeans) in which they participated. ANOVAs, with age as the

sole factor of interest, yielded a significant age main effect for the Nike extension measure, $F(2, 187) = 10.14, p < .01$, and the Levi extension measure, $F(2, 186) = 7.33, p < .01$, as predicted. Contrasts between age groups produced the expected pattern, with 8-year-olds having a lower brand extension score than 12-year-olds for both the Nike extension measure, $t(120) = -3.06, p < .01$, and the Levi extension measure, $t(119) = -2.80, p < .01$. Brand extension evaluations for the two oldest age groups did not differ from one another (all $ps > .10$). These findings are consistent with those reported earlier finding that 12- and 16-year-olds are distinctly different in their use of conceptual brand meanings than 8-year-olds.

Hypothesis Two

Our second hypothesis explored the source of age differences in the use of conceptual brand meanings. We have argued that the emergence and use of conceptual brand meanings depends heavily on the availability of age-related cognitive abilities and social inferencing skills. Even though the formation of conceptual brand meanings requires a certain level of product experience, it is our view that underdeveloped cognitive and social skills cannot be overcome by simply providing more exposure, familiarity, or experience with the product or brand in question. Thus, our prediction was that the age differences observed here—in product evaluations, owner impressions, and brand extension evaluations—will remain even if product experience is accounted for.

To test this prediction, the ANOVAs performed earlier for all three dependent measures were repeated with product experience as a covariate. Product experience was measured by assessing children's direct/indirect product experience and familiarity with brands in the product category, using the same scales described earlier in the article. Results from both analyses, shown in Table 4, were then com-

TABLE 3
Brand Extension Evaluations

Age	Levi Extensions			Nike Extensions		
	M	SD	n	M	SD	n
8	3.61	1.00	51	3.44	1.01	48
12	4.10	0.92	70	3.99	0.94	74
16	4.25	0.89	68	4.25	0.95	68

TABLE 4
p Values for Analyses of Variance (ANOVAs) With and Without Experience Covariate

Variable	Jeans		Athletic Shoes	
	Previous ANOVA	ANOVA With Experience Covariate	Previous ANOVA	ANOVA With Experience Covariate
Product evaluation				
Age	.60	.46	.00	.00
Brand	.00	.00	.00	.00
Age × Brand	.00	.00	.09	.06
Experience covariate		.76		.09
Owner impressions				
Age	.46	.43	.03	.03
Brand	.00	.00	.07	.07
Age × Brand	.06	.03	.96	.94
Experience covariate		.18		.76
Brand extension evaluation				
Age	.00	.19	.00	.01
Experience covariate		.00		.00

pared to see whether the effects of most interest (Age \times Brand Name interactions) could be eliminated by the experience covariate.

Results for the first two measures, product evaluations and owner impressions, provide support for our hypothesis. The product experience covariate failed to reach significance for analyses involving either measure across product categories. More importantly, the experience covariate made little difference in any of the main effects or interactions of most interest. With regard to the Age \times Brand Name interaction, the inclusion of an experience covariate actually increased (not decreased) the level of significance slightly for the analysis of product evaluations for athletic shoes and the analysis of owner impressions for jeans. Thus, it appears that age differences in product experience tended to obscure age differences in the use of conceptual brand meanings, contrary to what would be expected if experience differences were driving the age-related patterns in our dependent measures.

Results for the final measure, brand extension evaluations, were not as conclusive. In this case, the experience covariate attained significance in the analyses for both product categories. This makes little difference in the analysis for athletic shoes in which the age main effect remained significant. However, the age main effect was no longer significant in the analysis for jeans when an experience covariate was introduced. Taken together, these results suggest that product experience plays a more important role in explaining age differences in brand extension evaluations than predicted. Although any explanation should be treated as speculative at this point, it may be that brand extension evaluations involve more reflection about the product category the brand now inhabits (e.g., jeans or athletic shoes) and the fit between these types of products and the extension products. More focus on product category features, rather than just brand meanings, may dictate a larger role for product experience than would otherwise be the case.

DISCUSSION

Our major findings indicate that children of different ages relate to brand names in different ways. Children learn to relate to brand names at an early age, recognizing brand names in stores, developing preferences for some brands over others, and requesting branded items by name. However, brand names function as simple perceptual cues for these children, identifying a familiar object with particular features. Conceptual brand meanings, which specify the nonobservable abstract features of the product, enter into the picture in middle childhood (around age 8) and are incorporated into children's thinking and judgments a few years later. By the time children reach 12 years of age, they are able to think about brands on a conceptual or symbolic level and are also likely to incorporate these meanings into many types of brand-related judgments.

These findings provide a first glimpse of what brands mean to children of different ages. As such, our observations shed light on several topics related to how children value brands, such as brand consciousness, brand extendibility, and consumption symbolism. We discuss these topics following, as well as pinpoint areas for future research.

Brand Consciousness

Earlier in the article, we described the growing level of brand consciousness among children and the increasing level of concern over brand-related marketing to children. Our findings suggest that brand consciousness may be a very different phenomenon if we consider the age of the child. Brand consciousness in younger children who tend to relate to brands as a perceptual cue is likely driven by the familiarity and visibility of the brand name in advertising, retail outlets, and among their peers. For example, they might ask for New Balance® running shoes simply because they saw another child wearing them and they looked "neat." Brand consciousness in older children who relate to brands on a conceptual level as well is likely to be driven by a deeper sense of what the brand means and what it says about them. For example, they might ask for New Balance running shoes because it is the shoe of choice for "real runners" and distinguishes them from the hordes of "unathletes" who wear Nike shoes. Although both examples are indicative of brand consciousness, the rationale behind the request is driven by very different brand meanings.

With this background in mind, we might also ponder the effectiveness of recent initiatives to curb brand consciousness among children. Earlier in the article, we described initiatives such as the institution of school uniforms, dress codes banning brand names on clothes, and removal of teaching materials that promote brand names. We speculate that these types of remedies, which seek to reduce the visibility of brands and perhaps children's familiarity with brands, would be most effective with younger children (under 10 to 12 years). If we are correct in reasoning that brand consciousness is a more perceptually driven phenomenon among these children, then any remedy that reduces the perceptual salience of brand names should have a noticeable effect on the brand consciousness of this age group.

Brand Extendibility

Brand extensions have become a major focus of marketing strategies, aimed at fueling growth, improving competitive position, and increasing profits (Keller, 1998). Among the most intense arenas for this activity has been the children's market. Firms have eagerly promoted brand extensions to this market, launching new products under brand names already popular with children (e.g., Jell-O®, Life Savers®, Cheerios®) and brand names that heretofore were known mainly to adults (e.g., Pert Plus®, Polo®, Crest®).

Just how effective are these efforts and how far can brand names be extended and still be successful in the children's market? Our findings provide some preliminary answers to this question. In particular, our results suggest that brand extendibility differs depending on the age of the child. Eight-year-olds in our study evaluated both "near" and "far" brand extensions almost equally, generally liking all products as long as they carried a familiar and well-liked brand name such as Nike or Levi. It appears that once a brand has equity among this age group, it can be leveraged by extending the brand to a wide variety of products.

The story is much different for older children. Because older children can relate to the more conceptual side of brands, they are likely to be responsive to positioning and image-building efforts. Once a brand has equity among this age group, it can be leveraged to other products, but it must be done with care. Both 12- and 16-year-olds in our study evaluated near brand extensions more favorably than far brand extensions of well-liked brand names such as Nike and Levi in a manner consistent with the way adults evaluate brand extensions. In sum, the presence of well-known and well-liked brand names is no longer a guarantee of extension success with this older age group.

Consumption Symbolism

It has long been recognized that many products are purchased for the image they convey rather than the functional attributes they deliver. For example, ownership of a yacht or private plane evokes an image of wealth and success, as does ownership of certain brands of more common products such as clothes (Ralph Lauren®) or watches (Rolex®). Understanding the meanings attached to owning certain products or brands, known as *consumption symbolism*, is an important aspect of children's socialization into the consumer world.

Interestingly, there is little research on the topic of when children become adept at decoding the symbols that are generally attached to certain products and brands. The most insightful investigations to date have been conducted by Belk and his colleagues (Belk et al., 1982; Belk et al., 1984) examining the age at which children begin to draw inferences about the owners of products (e.g., homes, cars) based on their physical features such as size and style. In these studies, the authors found that inferences about people based on product ownership begin to emerge in children as young as 8 and are fully developed by age 11 or 12. Children younger than 8 years old show little evidence of understanding such symbolic aspects of consumption.

Our findings contribute to this stream of research by examining the age at which children understand consumption symbolism for brand names. In contrast to physical features of products such as size, brand names have an abstract component that is not readily interpreted without the aid of conceptual brand meanings related to the product and the type of

people who own it. Given that children's use of conceptual brand meanings does not develop until sometime during late childhood, one would expect that an understanding of consumption symbolism for brand names would emerge at a later age than prior research with product types. Indeed, we find that impressions of owners based on the brand of an item they own is not detectable in 8-year-olds but is evident for at least one of the product categories tested (jeans) by the time children reach 12 years of age.

Merging our findings with those of Belk and his colleagues (e.g., Belk et al., 1982; Belk et al., 1984), the following scenario emerges. The development of children's abilities to recognize consumption symbols begins as early as children are able to think symbolically, around 7 to 8 years of age. At this point, however, children are most attuned to perceptual features of their environment and are most likely to use these types of features in understanding the symbolism behind certain types of products. These abilities become more attuned to less visible and more complex features as children grow older. By the time children reach 11 or 12 years of age, they are also decoding consumption symbols based on brand names, forming impressions of product owners based on the image and meanings of the brand name identified with the product. Throughout childhood, then, the shift is from no understanding of consumption symbolism to one based on perceptual features to one also based on conceptual (brand) features.

Future Research

Our findings provide a first step in examining the meanings and functions of brands from childhood to adolescence. Future research could contribute to this area in several ways. First, from our data we know that children typically begin to use conceptual brand meanings in their judgments sometime between 8 and 12 years of age. We believe that the key period of development occurs from 10 to 12 years, but additional empirical research is warranted to better understand what occurs between 8 and 12 years of age and to test our notion that the key period of development is 10 to 12 years of age.

Second, more research surrounding the role that experience plays in facilitating the use of conceptual brand meanings would be welcome. We found that variations in product experience did not explain the age differences we observed in children's product evaluations and owner impressions. Additional research might examine brand experience, rather than general product experience, as it relates to age differences in these types of consumer judgments. In this vein, it might also be interesting to explore whether product or brand experience could explain why older children in our study used brand names as a basis for owner impressions for one of the products/brands tested (Levi jeans) but not for the other (Nike athletic shoes). Although any explanation would be speculative at this point, it may be that older children's experience leads them to distinguish

between brands that are nondiagnostic of the owner's personal characteristics (because everyone wears that brand, such as Nike athletic shoes) and those brands that are more diagnostic about the owner (because everyone wears different brands, and only some wear the focal brand, such as Levi jeans).

Third, it would be interesting to examine the age at which children possess conceptual brand meanings as opposed to using conceptual brand meanings in consumer judgments. Young children sometimes have concepts, knowledge, or strategies that are underutilized in task situations, which may be the case for conceptual brand meanings. Our review of research in child development led us to propose that children should begin thinking about brands conceptually by the time they are 8 years old, even though these meanings may not be utilized as easily as readily observable perceptual product features. However, we did not gather empirical data on the specific content of brand meanings for the 8-, 12-, and 16-year-old children in the study. Doing so would provide important developmental data but would also present substantial challenges in designing a measurement approach well suited for younger children. One may need to use measures that are more concrete and more visual than those typically employed for adults. Techniques such as the Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique, commonly known as ZMET (Zaltman & Coulter, 1995), which involves making a collage of pictures to represent brand meanings, might be especially effective for brand image assessments with children under 10 to 12 years of age.

Finally, branding research in this vein could shed light on the development of materialistic values in children. Virtually all of the published research on materialism in children focuses on adolescents (John, 1999). Yet materialistic values are being formed long before children reach their adolescent years, probably during the age span of 8 to 12 years studied here. The topic of how children relate to brands, the perceptual and conceptual meanings associated with brands, and how they use these brand meanings to make judgments about other people (as well as themselves) would seem to be an ideal starting point for understanding how children come to value material possessions. One might ask whether brand awareness and brand meaning development leads to more materialistic values, for example. Given much recent concern over the brand consciousness of youth today and recent criticisms of brand marketing to children, understanding more about these topics would provide a sounder basis for discussions about the impact of marketing to children.

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