

**Impact of emoji usage on brand personality perception and purchase intention**

Anastasiia Malysheva (SNR: 2080180)

Master Thesis

April 1, 2022

Word Count: 5856

MSc Social Psychology: Economic Psychology

Supervisor: Dr. T. M. Erle

Second Reader: Dr. T. Vander Elst

**Abstract**

This study investigates the impact of emoji use on perceived warmth, perceived competence and purchase intention for brands with Sincere and Competent brand personalities. The previous studies demonstrate contradicting results, showing different impact of emoji use on brands' purchase intention, warmth and competence perceptions. The results of our study indicate the effect of emoji use on brands' perceived warmth. Moreover, using emoji in advertising will not make a negative impact on brands' competence perception, while there will also be no benefit from them in regard to customers' purchase intention. Considering our results, we are still in need of research that will answer questions about conditions of emoji's negative impact and their influence on consumer behavior.

*Keywords:* Online Communication; Brand Personality; Perceived Warmth; Perceived Competence; Purchase Intention; Emoji.

### **Introduction**

Nowadays, social media is deeply integrated in our everyday life. According to statistics, 50% of the time users spend on their mobile phones is dedicated to social media applications, which accounts for approximately 2.5 hours per day (Deyan, 2021). Rapid worldwide spread of social media drastically changed the way people look for and receive information (Lou et al., 2019). For the majority of Internet users, social media has already become the most actual and significant information channel and source of news (Gottfried & Shearer, 2016). Due to customers' high engagement, social media serves as an important instrument for marketers. Users are constantly exposed to information flow, which includes ads and product promotions, and, by reposting and sharing, they contribute to its further dissemination. Due to this, brands become recognizable much faster than offline, they reach a wider audience and strengthen their relationships with customers (Mathews & Lee, 2019).

Apart from becoming one of the most significant information channels, social media changed the way people communicate. Today communication is extensive, rapid, and frequent, which decreases the interpersonal distance between individuals (Baym et al., 2004). New laws of social media go further than interpersonal communication and encourage consumers to interact with brands and companies. Closer interaction results in reduced misunderstanding and negative judgements, as well as customers being more involved and engaged with brands (Mathews & Lee, 2019). Moreover, up-to-date information and close communication increase consumers' identification with the brand and makes consumers see the brands as relational partners (Mathews & Lee, 2019). And, as interaction goes both ways, brands themselves can facilitate interpersonal relations and communication with their customers. Therefore, online communication plays an important role in brand development. As the interpersonal distance

between brand and consumers decrease, the latter start to perceive brands not only as a company they buy from, but also as a partner in communication with its own personality – brand personality.

### **Brand personality**

Providing an opportunity for close and firsthand communication, social media also enables marketers to humanize their brands. Brand humanization implies that consumers perceive brands as having human-like minds and characteristics and infer human-like personality (Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003). In consumer behavior and marketing the concept of brand personality is often considered in the context of the Brand Personality Theory developed by Aaker (1997).

According to the theory, brand personality is defined as “the set of human characteristics associated with a brand” (Aaker, 1997, p. 347). Brands with developed personality can be seen by customers as celebrities, famous historical figures as well as they can be related to oneself (Aaker, 1997). Taking Coca-Cola as an example, people tend to see it as cool, real and typically American while its closest competitor Pepsi has a bright, young and exciting personality (Aaker, 1997, p. 348).

However, there is a difference between how people infer the personality of an individual and a brand, respectively. While the perception of a human's personality is usually derived from appearances, demographics, values, beliefs and observations of behavior, traits become associated with the brand in a direct and indirect way. Directly this happens via people who are associated with the brand (e.g., customers, employees, CEO, etc.), transferring their traits to the brand. Indirectly, people make inferences about a brand's personality traits through its name, logo, products and product features, advertisements, and channels of distribution.

Brand Personality theory suggests 5 personality types: 1) Sincerity; 2) Excitement; 3) Competence; 4) Sophistication; 5) Ruggedness. Sincerity implies such traits as down-to-earth, honest, wholesome, and cheerful; Excitement — daring, spirited, imaginative and up to date; Competence is reliable, intelligent and successful; Sophistication refers to being charming and upper class; Ruggedness implies being tough and outdoorsy (Aaker, 1997). Even though the concept of the brand personality is yet to be developed from the scientific point of view, in practice a well-built brand personality facilitates customers' preferences, increases levels of trust and loyalty, and evokes emotions (Teimouri et al., 2014). These factors are especially important today, in a busy market, where the majority of products of one category can be easily copied. In such conditions, only companies with strong brand identity and personality manage to preserve and increase their market share. Summing up, brand personality has a serious impact on many characteristics which are important for a brand to develop. Yet, we need to understand how might work in an online environment and are the factors that influence the perception of the brand. Among others, scientists highlight such a factor as the use of emoji

### **Brand personality and emoji**

Emotions that brands transmit and evoke in consumers are an important part of both building and communicating personality. People are more likely to interact with those, with whom they share emotional connection, which is true both for person-person and brand-person relationships. According to Motista research (Sullivan, 2019), emotionally connected customers have higher lifetime value, stay with a brand for a longer period of time and will more likely recommend a brand's products. Moreover, emotional connection is one of the major predictors of customer loyalty (Magids et al., 2019).

In the social media environment, there are several ways to express emotions, one of the most popular of which is emoji. Emoji is defined as “a single picture that is used as a character of text” (Rodríguez-Hidalgo, Tan, & Verlegh, 2017). The emoji culture started with usage of only two pictures with opposite emotional valence — happy and sad emoticons (Ganster et al., 2012). Nowadays emoji account for more than 2700 pictures of faces with different emotions as well as pictures of subjects including clothes, plants, animals, sceneries, flags, and other symbols (Unicode, 2017). Emoji are accepted worldwide, and more than 92% of internet users report using them in their everyday online communication. Following this trend, brands also started using emoji in their promotional campaigns, both offline and online, and in communication with customers.

According to empirical studies, emoji influence the emotional state of internet users (Kang et al., 2013; Li et al., 2018). For instance, experimental evidence provided by Crystal (2001) and Derks et al. (2008) indicate that presence of emoji in the message can create a positive tone for the subsequent communication. Ganster et al. (2012) and Lohmann et al. (2017) report that people who receive messages with emoji feel happier and less stressed than those whose messages contain no emoji. In regard to communication with consumers, Das et al. (2019) show that usage of emoji in communication leads to increased positive affect in consumers. Moreover, not all the emoji make the receiver feel happier, as emoji on one valence tend to cause an affective state of the same valence (Das et al., 2019).

As it was noted above, emotions and emotional connections significantly facilitate customers' attitudes towards brand, their brand loyalty, lifetime value and future recommendations. Emoji, as an important emotional transmitter in an online environment, are also considered to influence consumer behavior and interactions between a company and

customers. It is suggested that consumers subjected to ads with emoji have higher purchasing intentions than in case with no-emoji ads (Das et al., 2019). According to Huang et al. (2008), the use of emoji in online communication helps to express feelings, increase the intensity of messages and posts as well as to make the interaction more personalized. In the case of customer service, the texts from service staff which contained emoji made customers see them as more warm and sociable. These perceptions facilitated the connection between the company and customers (Zhang et al., 2011).

While research on this topic is scarce, studies on the association between affective states and purchasing intentions show that consumers in positive states will more likely buy products compared to ones in negative states (Babin et al., 1995; Swinyard, 1993). Therefore, affective states might play a mediating role between emoji use and purchase intentions.

Nevertheless, modern studies report that emoji usage in communication doesn't work equally well. For example, Das et al. (2019) show the influence of emoji on affective states in different contexts. Taking two types of products — hedonic and utilitarian — they found that customers experience increased positive affect only in case of hedonic products while there is no significant effect on emotional affect towards utilitarian products (Das et al., 2019). Furthermore, Gilkson et al. (2017) examined the impact of emoji use in work-based online communication. In their study, they use two dimensions of person perception developed by Fiske et al. (2008), namely warmth and competence. Warmth implies trustworthiness, sincerity, kindness, and friendliness, while competence refers to ambitiousness, assertiveness, efficacy, and skillfulness (Fiske et al., 2008). According to the study results and contrary to previous researchers, usage of emoji in work-based communication doesn't increase perceived warmth of the sender but instead decreases the competence perception (Gilkson et al., 2017). Finally, Li et al. (2018) report that in

situations of communication with service employees, customers tend to perceive those who use emoji as more warm but less competent. Therefore, we can conclude that emoji might have an important influence on both individual and personality perception. Yet, as previous studies report different and even contradicting results, we still are in need of insights on emoji effects.

### **Hypotheses**

As noted above, not only individuals but also brands have personality. Building and maintaining it is an important task for a marketing specialist. As social media became a major promotional environment, building adequate and relevant to brand personality communication is a priority now. And while emoji use can be seen as a good tool for creating emotional connection and increase of customer engagement, according to above-mentioned studies, it doesn't mean that it fits all the brands equally. In contrast, relying on the results provided by Glikson et al. (2017), it's possible to suggest that brands prioritizing competence in their brand personality might meet negative consequences of emoji usage. In the context of the Brand Personality Theory (Aaker, 1997), competence and qualities related to this personality perception dimension are related to brand personality type Competence, while warmth dimension is close to Sincerity type.

Following the conclusions made by Li et al. (2018), that use of emoji in online communication will increase the perceived warmth, and results of study by Das et al. (2019), that the emoji use will increase perceived warmth only in case of hedonic products, we hypothesize the following: brands with Sincerity brand personality type experience an increased warmth perception in case of emoji use in their social media communication (Hypothesis 1).

According to Glickson et al. (2017) and Li et al. (2018), in the case of perceived competence emoji doesn't have a facilitating effect. On the contrary, they tend to decrease the



perception of brands and products as competent. Therefore, we hypothesize that brands with a Competent brand personality type are perceived as less competent in case of emoji use in their social media communication compared to the condition when emoji are not used (Hypothesis 2).

In regard to purchase intention, we can refer to the study of Matilla and Wirtz (2001) and Das and Hagtvedt (2016). According to their research the effect of emotionally arousing stimuli on purchase intention is mediated by their perceived fit and congruence. Following this line of evidence, we can suggest that emoji are congruent for Sincere brand personality types, as they increase warmth, and incongruent for Competent types as they decrease perceived competence. Therefore, we hypothesize that purchase intention for brands with Competent personalities that use an emoji will be lower than for Sincere brands that use emoji (Hypothesis 3) and that the effect of emojis on purchasing intention for Competent brands is mediated by perceptions of competence (Hypothesis 4).

This study is aimed to discover the impact of emoji use on brand perception. It answers the question “Does emoji usage influence perception of brands with different personalities and purchasing intention for them?”.

The theoretical significance of this study lies in the fact that there is a scarcity of empirical data on the influence of emoji usage on consumer behavior and brand perception. This research will contribute to understanding the relations between emoji usage and brand personality, which confer the possibility for predicting consumer behavior. Moreover, there is still a scarcity in research on the topic of the influence of emoji on people’s affective states and whether or not they are equal to actual facial expressions. Therefore, in this regard, our research contributes to testing of theories of emotions online.

As it was said above, social media promotion and related to it communication with consumers as well as building and maintaining engaging and stand-out brand personality have not only emotional but also economical value as it allows to differ from competitors, attract light customers, keep loyal ones, preserve and expand market share which results in increase in company's revenue. And, as it goes, the devil lies in details. Even such a small marketing tool as emoji usage can make an impact on a brand personality. Therefore, from the point of practical significance, this study will show how emoji influence brand personality perception.

### **Method**

To test these hypotheses a study with a 2 (Brand Personality Type: Sincerity vs. Competence) x 2 (Emoji: Emoji vs. No-Emoji) within-subjects design was conducted. Perceived warmth, perceived competence and purchase intention were taken as dependent variables. The questionnaire used in the study was created via Qualtrics and conducted online with Prolific. Ethical approval for the study has been obtained under the blanket ethics application of the department of social psychology at Tilburg University.

### **Procedure**

For the main study participants were told that the goal of the study is to assess the way certain brands are perceived. The study took approximately 5 min and participants received a small monetary compensation for it. After signing an informed consent, participants were asked to provide their age and gender identification.

After that, they were asked to look at four different Twitter-themed social media advertisements and form an impression about the brands behind these ads. The advertisements for our study were taken from original accounts of the brands. In the process of stimuli

development very little changes were applied to the advertisements as we prioritized ecological validity of our study. Participants' task was to read advertisements with or without an emoji for four different companies (two sincere brands, two competent brands). For emoji and no-emoji conditions the same ads content was used. The length of the advertisements wasn't longer than two sentences. After each advertisement participants were asked to rate the brands on perceived warmth, perceived competence and their purchase intention.

### **Sampling**

Based on the analysis of G\*Power, a sample size no smaller than 200 participants is required for the research. The final dataset included  $N= 202$  participants, 101 of which are male, 99 – female and 2 preferred not to answer the question about gender. Participants were in the age range between 18 and 70 ( $M= 26.4$ ;  $MD= 24$ ;  $SD= 7.52$ ).

### **Manipulated variables**

In the current study we manipulated two variables: brand personality type (Sincerity vs. Competence) and presence of emoji (Emoji vs No-Emoji).

***Brand personality type.*** To determine the companies that fall into Sincerity and Competence brands personality types we conducted a pretest study. For these purposes,  $N= 20$  participants were recruited via social media channels and asked to rate the personality of eight companies: IKEA, Hallmark, Heinz, Volkswagen, Ernst & Young, Deutsche Bank, Google and DHL. The pre-test study took approximately 10 min to complete, and participants didn't receive any compensation. After signing an informed consent, participants were asked to rate the brands on Aaker's (1997) Brand Personality Scale, in particular 10 traits ascribed to Sincerity and 8 traits of Competence. The traits for Sincerity included down-to-earth, family oriented, honest, sincere, real, wholesome, original, cheerful, sentimental and friendly. Such characteristics as

reliable, hardworking, secure, intelligent, technical, corporate, successful and leader were ascribed to Competent brand personality type. Participants were asked to reflect how well these attributes described all brands using a 5-point Likert scale (from 1 = Not at all to 5 = Very well). Based on the results, the brands with the biggest difference between general Competence and Sincerity scores were used in the main study. According to the pretest results, the most Sincere brands are Hallmark and Heinz, while Deutsche Bank and Ernst & Young are the most Competent ones. For the pre-test no demographic data was collected (Table 1). On the basis of this, in the main study the brand personality type was manipulated by presenting participants advertisements of two Sincere (Hallmark and Heinz) and two Competent (Deutsche Bank and Ernst & Young) brands.

**Table 1**

*Pretest mean scores for brands on Sincerity and Competence brand personality dimensions*

	Sincerity	Competence	Diff	Rank Sincerity	Rank Competence
IKEA	4.03	3.72	0.31	1	5
Hallmark	3.63	2.95	0.68	2	7
Volkswagen	3.19	3.88	-0.70	4	2
Heinz	3.44	2.83	0.61	3	8
Ernst & Young	2.56	3.85	-1.29	8	3
Deutsche Bank	2.62	3.77	-1.15	7	4
Google	3.09	4.19	-1.10	5	1
DHL	2.94	3.54	-0.60	6	6

**Emoji.** To manipulate emoji in the study we created two conditions: emoji and no-emoji. Although we used the original content of brands' Twitter ads, we added emoji to them in the emoji condition if there were none already, and we removed all emoji from the ads in the no-emoji condition if the original ad included them. All advertisements in Emoji condition include at least one human related emoji and from one to five object related emoji. For the study we took emoji designed by Apple. In this research we included the following emoji: woman teacher (combined U+1F469 and U+1F3EB), purple heart (Unicode U+1F49C), thinking face (U+1F914), coconut (U+1F965), lemon (U+1F34B), pepper (U+1F336), seedling (U+1F331), tomato (U+1F345), face with monocle (U+1F9D0), high voltage (U+26A1), woman technologist (combined U+1F469 and U+1F4BB) and chart increasing (U+1F4C8). The emoji variable is orthogonal in relation to the brand personality variable. The participants were presented with both emoji and no-emoji advertisements.

### **Dependent variables**

The dependent variables in the current study are perceived warmth, perceived competence and purchase intention.

**Warmth and Competence.** We measured brand perceived warmth and perceived competence with a scale developed within a framework of Stereotype Content Model (Fiske et al., 2007). The dimension of warmth includes such characteristics as tolerant, good natured and sincere ( $\alpha = .82$ ), whereas the competence dimension is defined as competent, confident, independent, competitive and intelligent ( $\alpha = .90$ ). Participants were asked to estimate how well the following attributes describe the brands on a 5-point Likert scale (from 1 = Not at all to 5 = Very well).

**Purchase intention.** To measure purchase intention, we asked participants a question “If you needed a product or service of this category, how likely would you be to do business with this brand?”. The intention itself was measured with the 5-point Likert scale on which 1 = “never” and 5 = definitely. The question was developed on the basis of stimuli created by Spears and Singh (2004).

## Results

The data was analyzed with SPSS v.27 and SPSS PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2013). The hypotheses 1-4 were tested with two-way repeated measures ANOVA for independent variables brand personality type (Sincerity vs. Competence) and emoji (Emoji vs. No-Emoji), and dependent variables perceived warmth, perceived competence and purchase intention. The hypothesis 5 was tested within a moderated parallel mediation framework, using model 7 by Hayes (2013).

### Perceived Warmth

Following Hypothesis 1, it was predicted that usage of emoji will increase the Sincere brands’ perceived warmth. The results showed significant main effects for Brand Personality Type,  $F(1, 201) = 97.0, p < .001$ , and Emoji,  $F(1, 201) = 5.63, p = .019$ , while the interaction of Brand Personality Type and Emoji was not significant,  $F(1, 201) = 0.48, p = .49$ . It indicates that ratings in perceived warmth were different for different brand personality types and for ads with and without emoji. At the same time, the effect of emoji on perceived warmth wasn’t different for Sincerity and Competence personality types.

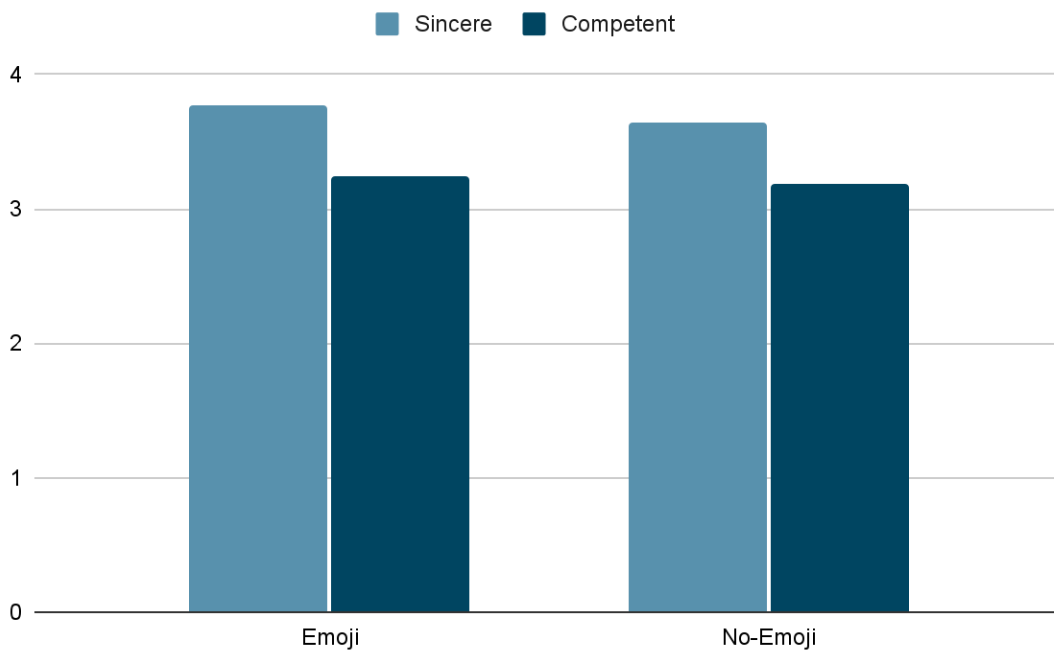
Following the effect of brand personality type on perceived warmth, the compared means showed that Sincere brands (emoji:  $M = 3.77, SD = .059$ ; no-emoji:  $M = 3.64, SD = .058$ ) scored

higher on warmth dimension than Competent brands (emoji:  $M = 3.26$ ,  $SD = .062$ ; no-emoji:  $M = 3.19$ ,  $SD = .063$ ) (Figure 1). It means that people in general see Sincere brands as warmer.

Considering the effect of emojis on the warmth perception, there is a slight difference in scores for Sincere brands when presented advertisements with ( $M = 3.77$ ,  $SD = .059$ ) and without emoji ( $M = 3.64$ ,  $SD = .058$ ). For Competent brands there is no significant difference in means for advertisements with emoji ( $M = 3.26$ ,  $SD = .062$ ) and without ( $M = 3.19$ ,  $SD = .063$ ). In conclusion, Hypothesis 1 was supported: there is a small, yet significant difference between emoji and no-emoji conditions for Sincere brand personality type.

**Figure 1**

*Mean scores for dependent variable purchase warmth*



### **Perceived Competence**

For Hypothesis 2 it was predicted that competent brands will be rated as less competent in the emoji condition compared to the no-emoji condition. The results showed no significant main

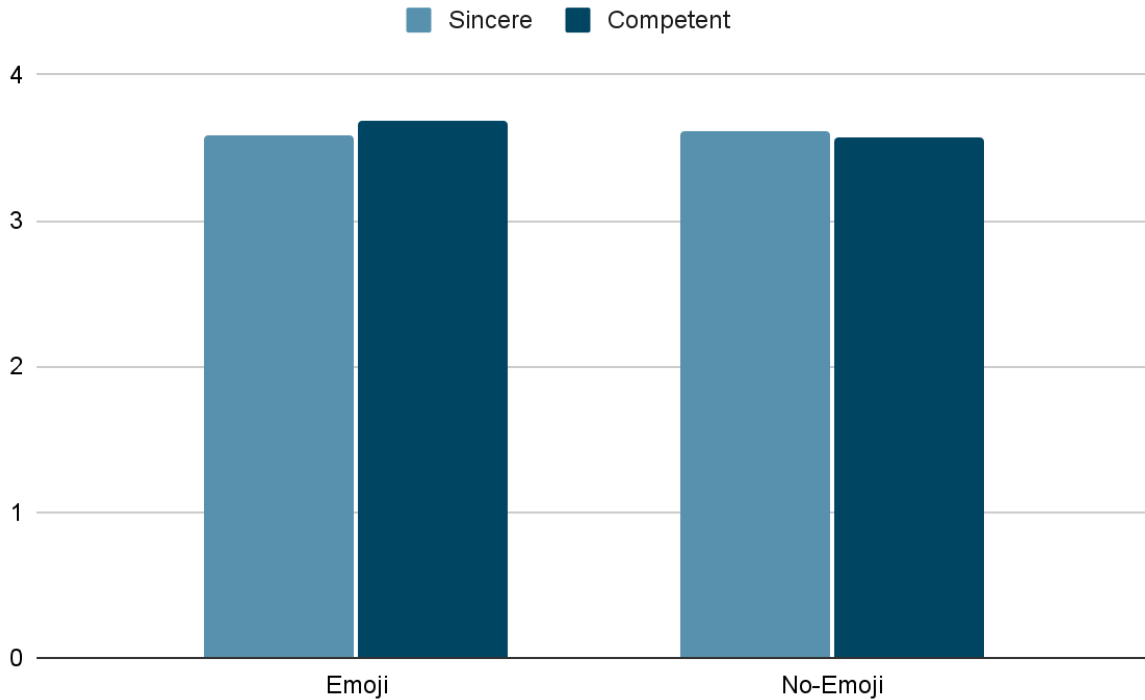
effects on perceived competence for Brand Personality Type,  $F(1, 201) = .29, p = .59$ , Emoji,  $F(1, 201) = .76, p = .39$ , and no significant interaction of Brand Personality Type and Emoji,  $F(1, 201) = 1.7, p = .19$ . It shows that neither changes in personality types between Sincerity and Competence, nor presence or absence of emoji in the advertisements influence the respondent's perceptions of brands on competence dimension.

In contrast to our prediction, there was no significant difference in perceived competence found for Competent brands when emoji were present in the ads ( $M = 3.68, SD = .062$ ) and when they were not ( $M = 3.57, SD = .063$ ) (Figure 2). This indicates that participants rated equally competent brands with Competence brand personality when they saw their advertisement with and without emoji. The same can be said about Sincerity personality type (emoji:  $M = 3.77, SD = .059$ ; no-emoji:  $M = 3.64, SD = .058$ ). Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was rejected: there is no difference in perceived competence for Competent brands in the emoji and no-emoji condition.



**Figure 2**

*Mean scores for dependent variable competence*



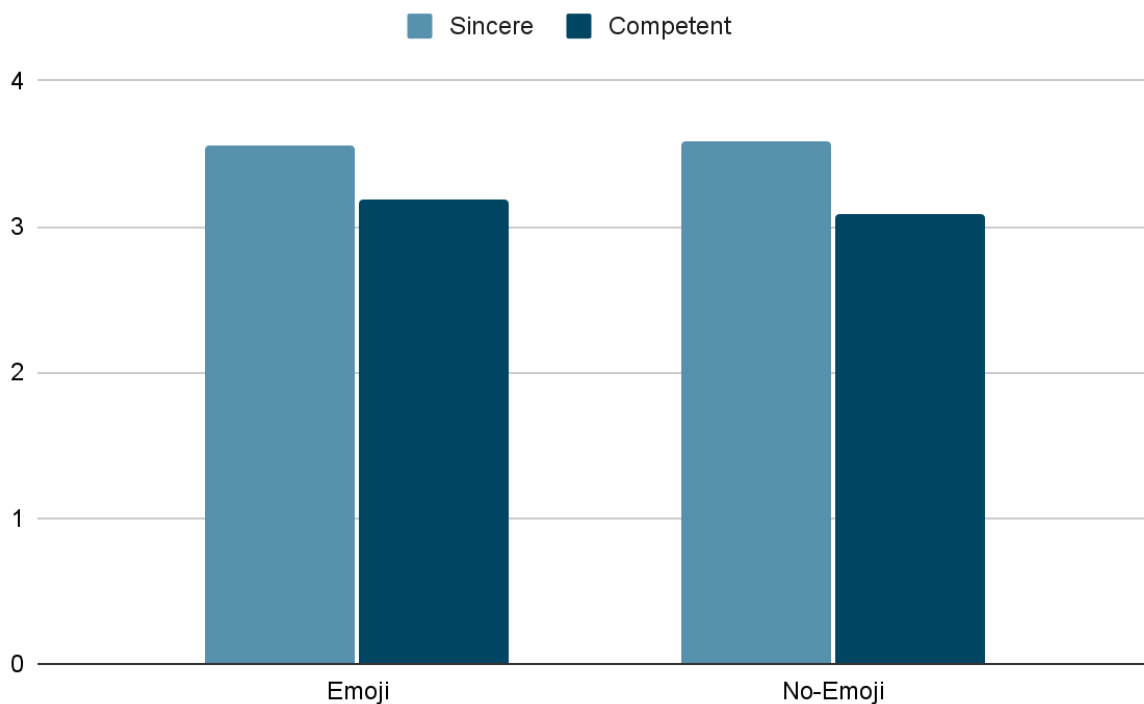
**Purchase Intention**

It was predicted that purchase intention will be lower for Competent brands that use emoji in their advertisements compared to Sincere brands that use emoji (Hypothesis 3). Our results indicate that there is a significant effect of Brand Personality Type,  $F(1, 201) = 40.75, p < .001$ , which means that the changes in personality types affect the purchase intention. Yet, there was no significant effect found Emoji,  $F(1, 201) = .48, p < .49$ , and interaction of Brand Personality Type and Emoji,  $F(1, 201) = .66, p < .36$ . These results suggest that the respondents reported an equal purchase intention towards brands regardless of the advertisement being presented with (Sincerity:  $M = 3.56, SD = .075$ ; Competence:  $M = 3.19, SD = .074$ ) or without emoji (Sincerity:

M = 3.58, SD = .071; Competence: M = 3.09, SD = .077) (Figure 3). Comparing the means for Sincerity and Competence personality types in emoji condition, it was found that Sincere brands (M = 3.56, SD = .075) score higher in purchase intention than Competent brands (M = 3.19, SD = .074). In conclusion, Hypothesis 3 was partly rejected: the Competent brands indeed score lower in purchase intention compared to Sincere brands while using emoji in their communication. Yet, the same is true for the no-emoji condition – even when no emoji are present in the advertisements, Sincere brands still have higher mean scores than Competent brands.

**Figure 3**

*Mean scores for dependent variable purchase intention*



### **Mediation**

To conduct a mediation analysis, we used PROCESS macro for SPSS. To test Hypothesis 4 we used a mediation model 7 by Hayes (Hayes, 2013). The prediction for this hypothesis was that the effect of emoji on purchase intention was mediated by the perception of competence.

As the first step, we tested the impact of the independent variable on the mediator, namely the impact of emoji on perception of warmth and competence. In the case of perceived warmth the model showed its significance,  $R^2 = .076$ ,  $p < .001$ , while for the perceived competence the model was found insignificant,  $R^2 = .002$ ,  $p = .64$ . We also discovered a significant interaction between brand personality type and perceived warmth,  $t = -3.07$ ,  $p = .002$ , which indicates that the perception of a brand as warm will depend on its personality type. The negative effect indicates that Sincere brands will be seen as warmer compared to Competent brands. The interaction between emoji and the perceived warmth was found to be insignificant,  $t = -1.08$ ,  $p = .28$ .

For the second step we tested the impact of warmth and competence perception, the mediator, on the purchase intention, the dependent variable. The results indicated the model's significance,  $R^2 = .47$ ,  $p < .001$ . Both warmth,  $t = 11.76$ ,  $p < .001$ , and competence,  $t = 12.39$ ,  $p = .001$ , were found to be significant predictors of purchase intention. Therefore, we can say that the intention of a person to buy or not to buy a product/service will be influenced by their perception of the brand as warm or competent.

Regarding the direct effects of emoji on purchase intention, there was no significant effect found,  $t = .42$ ,  $p = .67$ . This indicated that the usage of emoji itself cannot predict the purchase intention.

Considering indirect effects, in case of warmth there was no significant effect both for both Sincerity,  $\beta = -.06$ ,  $CI_{95\%} = [-.13, .01]$ , and Competence,  $\beta = -.02$ ,  $CI_{95\%} = [-.11, .05]$  brand personality types (Table 2).. Confidence intervals for both types include zero, which indicates that there was no mediation through the warmth perception found. The perceived warmth doesn't explain the effect of emoji on the purchase intention. More likely, warmth is a direct predictor for a purchase intention.

For the perceived competence, there were also no significant indirect effects found for brand personality types (Sincerity:  $\beta = .01$ ,  $CI_{95\%} = [-.07, .09]$ ; Competence:  $\beta = -.05$ ,  $CI_{95\%} = [-.14, .03]$ ) (Table 2). Confidence intervals for both types also include zero, which shows the absence of mediation effect through the competence perception. Instead, the perceived competence has a direct impact on the purchase intention. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 was rejected: there is no mediation effect of brand perception on emoji and purchase intention. Yet, the direct effect of perceived warmth and competence on purchase intention.

**Table 2**

*Moderated mediation direct and indirect effects' estimates*

Effect	BP	$\beta$	SE	$CI_{min}$	$CI_{max}$
Direct		.02	.06	-.08	.13
Indirect (Warmth)	Sincerity	-.06	.04	-.13	.01
	Competence	-.03	.04	-.11	.05
Indirect (Competence)	Sincerity	.01	.04	-.07	.09
	Competence	-.05	.04	-.14	.03

### **Discussion and Future Implications**

The goal of the current study was to investigate whether advertisements with emoji, compared to no-emoji advertisements, will influence the perception of the brands as warm and competent, and whether this affects intentions to do business with a brand. Based on works of Glikson et al. (2018), Li et al. (2018) and Das et al. (2016, 2019), we extend their results and conclusions by moving from individuals-individual to brand-individual communication by manipulating brand personality types.

In line with Li et al. (2018) and Das et al. (2019), we found that use of emoji in interaction with customers will increase brand's perceived warmth. Yet, in our study, this effect is small. Our results could have been influenced by the following factors. First, we can suggest that the respondents evaluated the brands not on the basis of emoji used in the advertisements, but on the basis of associations they already created for these brands. For example, such companies as Heinz and Deutsche Bank exist for many years and have a lot of clients all over the world. Therefore, while rating them on a warmth/competence scale, people will more likely use the impressions they have already had than consider emoji. As we still found an effect of emoji, we can infer that they were considered in the process of rating but could have been not among the most important factors.

Our preference for ecological validity to internal validity can be another explanation for small emoji effect on warmth for Sincere brands. For our stimuli, we used the original advertisements from brands' Twitter accounts. In the process of creating a questionnaire, we applied minimal changes which resulted in use of both face and non-human object emoji. Following the conclusions of the research on the impact of emoji on people's affective state, we can infer that it can be only related to the emoji that display faces with emotions, not the objects

or symbols. Therefore, we can suggest that the effect of emoji present in our stimuli wasn't enough to make an impact on brand perceptions. Yet, as it is still a suggestion, the question about the impact of face emoji and object emoji is still open and is yet to be researched.

In accordance with results of Das et al. (2019) and in contradiction with Li et al. (2018) and Glikson et al. (2018), we discovered that the use of emoji in advertising had no significant effect on competence perception for brands with Competent personality type. Considering the results for Hypothesis 1, this finding has a special importance. It shows that while emoji clearly increase the perceived warmth, it makes no impact on brands' perceptions as competent. This elevates the danger of emoji use – companies can use them in their social media without a fear of being seen as incompetent. Yet, there is still a question: does emoji have no impact on competence at all, or does this impact still can be made by manipulating emoji amount and type? Also, we can suggest that there might be other variables that influence competence and which were not included in our study.

Regarding the purchase intention of respondents, our results indicate that emoji have no impact on it, yet the type of brand personality has. Moreover, perception of warmth and competence has no mediating role on emoji and purchase intention. These conclusions are contrary to conclusions made by Das and Hagtvedt (2016). In the basis of our prediction lies the assumption that use of emoji is not congruent with Competence personality type, which will result in decrease in perceived competence. Yet, our results for Hypothesis 2 showed that there is no significant effect of emoji use on competence perception. Consequently, the changes in competence/warmth doesn't indicate the fit between emoji use in advertisements and brand personality type.

Yet, there are two aspects of our results that should be discussed. First, for Hypothesis 3 we discovered the effect of brand personality type on purchase intention. The explanation for that can be the following. People buy the products of Sincere brands (cards, souces) more often than products of Competent brands (open accounts, use consulting services). Such products are easy to buy, spending money on them doesn't involve risk and big sums of money. Consequently, people are more in touch with these brands, which creates more associations with them. Compared to banking and consulting services, that are used either not so often or by companies and legal persons, we indeed can infer that purchase intention for Sincere brands can be higher.

Secondly, for Hypothesis 4, we found a direct positive effect of brand perception on purchase intention. That might indicate that respondents will more likely buy a product/service from the brand that they rate higher on the dimensions of warmth and competence.

### **Limitations and Future Implications**

Our study has two major lines of limitations. First, as it was already mentioned in the discussion part, we were striving not for internal but for ecological validity, which would increase the practical significance of this study. For our stimuli we used the original advertisements from Twitter which included not only face emoji, but also object emoji. As in our study we assumed that emoji aroused customers' emotions, in particular emotions of the same valence, using object emoji wasn't relevant for our research. Therefore, for future studies we can choose to follow the path of internal validity, and, as an option, increase the number of face emoji and make advertisements more similar for different brands.

Secondly, although we have found the impact of brand personality type on warmth and purchase intention, for future research we also need to look for more "pure" examples of brand personality types. In our research, the brands were not "pure" – even though we have chosen the

brands with the biggest difference between Competence and Sincerity score, the difference still was very small. To avoid any possible issues with brand personality types, we suggest expanding the set of brands and run another pretest. Additionally, the pretest sampling can be increased, as sampling which consisted of 20 respondents could have been unrepresentative.

The results of our study can be applied in practice in the following ways. Assuming that we were correct about people rating brands on the basis of their associations, we can have a look at startup companies. Before entering the market, their marketers have to consider what type of brand personality they are going to communicate. Regarding the use of emoji, in their social media, if they want to increase the perception of their brand as warm, they can use emoji. Yet, if they strive for more competent brand perception, they still can use emoji, as there is no significant effect of emoji on the perceived competence. For more well-known brands, to which people have already formed association, we can suggest that continuous use of emoji can lead to increase in perceived warmth, Yet, as we have no empirical data on that, we can leave this question for future research.

### **Conclusion**

Nowadays more and more often we communicate online and the brand-customer communication is not an exception. Emoji play an important role in these interactions, while their exact impact is yet to be discovered. Results of our study indicate that emoji have an effect of perceived warmth, especially for Sincere brands. On the other hand, the results don't show any negative impact of emoji on brands' competence perception. Yet, for brands of both personality types use of emoji gives no benefit in terms of customers' purchase intention. Therefore, we are still in need of a clear understanding of the conditions when emoji have a negative influence and how it can change the customers' behavior.



### Reference

- Aaker, J. L. (1997). Dimensions of Brand Personality. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. Published.  
<https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.945432>
- Avis, M. (2012). Brand Personality Factor Based Models: A Critical Review. *Australasian Marketing Journal*, 20(1), 89–96. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ausmj.2011.08.003>
- Azoulay, A., & Kapferer, J. N. (2003). Do brand personality scales really measure brand personality? *Journal of Brand Management*, 11(2), 143–155.  
<https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.bm.2540162>
- Babin, B. J., Boles, J. S., & Darden, W. R. (1995). Salesperson Stereotypes, Consumer Emotions, and their Impact on Information Processing. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 23(2), 94–105. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0092070395232002>
- Baym, N. K., Zhang, Y. B., & Lin, M. C. (2004). Social interactions across media: Interpersonal communication on the internet, telephone and face-to-face. *New Media & Society*, 6(3), 299–318. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444804041438>
- Hayes, F. (2013). Introduction to Mediation, Moderation, and Conditional Process Analysis: A Regression-Based Approach. New York, NY: The Guilford Press. *Journal of Educational Measurement*, 51(3), 335–337. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jedm.12050>
- Crystal, D. (2001). *Language and the Internet*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Das, G., & Hagtvedt, H. (2016). Consumer responses to combined arousal-inducing stimuli. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 33(1), 213–215.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijresmar.2015.11.003>

- Das, G., Wiener, H. J., & Kareklas, I. (2019). To emoji or not to emoji? Examining the influence of emoji on consumer reactions to advertising. *Journal of Business Research*, 96, 147–156. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.11.007>
- Derks, D., Bos, A. E., & Von Grumbkow, J. (2008). Emoticons in computer-mediated communication: Social motives and social context. *Cyber Psychology & Behavior*, 11, 99-101. doi:10.1089/cpb.2007.9926
- Deyan, G. (2021, Nov 23). How much time do users spend on social media in 2021? Retrieved from <https://techjury.net/blog/time-spent-on-social-media/>
- Eisend, M., & Stokburger-Sauer, N. E. (2013). Measurement Characteristics of Aaker's Brand Personality Dimensions: Lessons to be Learned from Human Personality Research. *Psychology & Marketing*, 30(11), 950–958. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20658>
- Fiske, S. T., Cuddy, A. J., & Glick, P. (2007). Universal dimensions of social cognition: warmth and competence. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 11(2), 77–83. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2006.11.005>
- Fiske, S. T., Cuddy, A. J. C., Glick, P., & Xu, J. (2002). A model of (often mixed) stereotype content: Competence and warmth respectively follow from perceived status and competition. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 82(6), 878–902. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.82.6.878>
- Ganster, T., Eimler, S. C., & Krämer, N. C. (2012). Same Same But Different!? The Differential Influence of Smilies and Emoticons on Person Perception. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 15(4), 226–230. <https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2011.0179>

- Glikson, E., Cheshin, A., & Kleef, G. A. V. (2017). The Dark Side of a Smiley. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 9(5), 614–625.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550617720269>
- Gottfried, J., Shearer, E. (2016, May 26). News Use across Social Media Platforms 2016. *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved from  
<http://www.journalism.org/2016/05/26/news-use-across-social-media-platforms-2016/>.
- Huang, A. H., Yen, D. C., & Zhang, X. (2008). Exploring the potential effects of emoticons. *Information & Management*, 45(7), 466–473. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.im.2008.07.001>
- Japutra, A., & Molinillo, S. (2019). Responsible and active brand personality: On the relationships with brand experience and key relationship constructs. *Journal of Business Research*, 99, 464–471. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2017.08.027>
- Kang, L., Tan, C. H., & Zhao, J. L. (2013). The impact of intra-transaction communication on customer purchase behaviour in E-commerce context. Paper presented at the *Proceedings of the 24th Australasian Conference on Information Systems*, Retrieved from  
[www.scopus.com](http://www.scopus.com)
- Li, X. S., Chan, K. W., & Kim, S. (2018). Service with Emoticons: How Customers Interpret Employee Use of Emoticons in Online Service Encounters. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 45(5), 973–987. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcr/ucy016>
- Lohmann, K., Pyka, S. S., & Zanger, C. (2017). The effects of smileys on receivers' emotions. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 34, 489-495. doi:10.1108/JCM-02-2017-2120
- Lou, C., Yuan, S. (2019). Influencer Marketing: How Message Value and Credibility Affect Consumer Trust of Branded Content on Social Media. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 19(1), 58–73. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2018.1533501>

MacInnis, D. J., & Folkes, V. S. (2017). Humanizing brands: When brands seem to be like me, part of me, and in a relationship with me. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 27(3),

355–374. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcps.2016.12.003>

Magids, S., Zorfas, A., & Leemon, D. (2015, Nov). The New Science of Customer Emotions. A Better Way to Drive Growth and Probability. *Harvard Business Review*. Retrieved from

<https://hbr.org/2015/11/the-new-science-of-customer-emotions>

Mathews, S., & Lee, S. E. J. (2019). Fashion brands' use of emojis on Twitter: An exploratory study. *Fashion, Style & Popular Culture*, 6(3), 319–332.

[https://doi.org/10.1386/fspc.6.3.319\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/fspc.6.3.319_1)

Mattila, A. S., & Wirtz, J. (2001). Congruency of scent and music as a driver of in-store evaluations and behavior. *Journal of Retailing*, 77(2), 273–289.

[https://doi.org/10.1016/s0022-4359\(01\)00042-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0022-4359(01)00042-2)

Mohr, I. (2013). The impact of social media on the fashion industry. *Journal of Applied Business and Economics*, 15(2), 17-22.

Rodríguez-Hidalgo, C., Tan, E. S., & Verlegh, P. W. (2017). Expressing emotions in blogs: The role of textual paralinguistic cues in online venting and social sharing posts. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 73, 638–649. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2017.04.007>

Sook Kwon, E., Kim, E., Sung, Y., & Yun Yoo, C. (2014). Brand followers: Consumer motivation and attitude towards brand communications on Twitter. *International Journal of Advertising*, 33(4), 657–680. <https://doi.org/10.2501/ija-33-4-657-680>

Spears, N., & Singh, S. N. (2004). Measuring Attitude toward the Brand and Purchase Intentions. *Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising*, 26(2), 53–66.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10641734.2004.10505164>

Sullivan, F. C. (2019, Feb 19). Let's Talk About Brand Personality, Voice and Tone. Retrieved from

<https://medium.com/s/how-to-build-a-brand/lets-talk-about-brand-personality-voice-and-tone-28276a48d5c1>

Swinyard, W. R. (1993). The Effects of Mood, Involvement, and Quality of Store Experience on Shopping Intentions. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 20(2), 271.

<https://doi.org/10.1086/209348>

Teimouri, H., Fanae, N., Jenab, K., Khoury, S., & Moslehpour, S. (2016). Studying the Relationship between Brand Personality and Customer Loyalty: A Case Study of Samsung Mobile Phone. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 11(2), 1.

<https://doi.org/10.5539/ijbm.v11n2p1>

Unicode (2018). Emoji counts, v11.0. Retrieved from Unicode

<https://unicode.org/emoji/charts/emoji-counts.html>, Accessed date: 29 October 2018.

Youn, S., & Jin, S. V. (2021). In A.I. we trust?" The effects of parasocial interaction and technopian versus luddite ideological views on chatbot-based customer relationship management in the emerging "feeling economy. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 119,

106721. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2021.106721>

Zhang, L., Erickson, L. B., and Webb, H. C. (2011). *Effects of 'Emotional Text' on Online Customer Service Chat*. In the Graduate Conference 2011 Houston. 008.07.001