

The relationship between self-image and apartment furnishing image

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In the following contribution the author presents the relation between the self-concept and the product/brand purchase. In the introduction the author gives a short review of self-concept definitions, applicability of the self-concept, structure of the self-concept and self-image/product image relationship. The objective of the research was to find out if there exists a connection between the self-image and the apartment furnishing image. Four dependent variables were included: the actual self-image, the ideal self-image, the actual apartment furnishing image and the desired apartment furnishing image. Each image was measured on 15 item scale created by Malhotra. Then canonical correlation was computed between four sets of variables describing each image. The main conclusion was that there exists a relation between the self-image and the apartment furnishing image. The strongest relation was found between the ideal self-image and the desired apartment furnishing image. The results have both theoretical and practical value.

Self-concept (or self-image) has become a popular approach in recent years to investigating possible relationships between how individuals perceive themselves and what behaviour they exhibit as consumers (Loudon & Della Bitta, 1993).

The article discusses the relationship between self-image and apartment furnishing image. Schiffman and Kanuk (1991), Belk (1988), and Malhotra (1988) list apartment furnishing among the products which is appropriate to express self image. In the research, the relationship between the actual and ideal self-image on one hand and the image of actual and desired apartment furnishing on the other was investigated.

The problem of relationship between the self-image and the brand image is relatively old. The first investigations originate into the 60's (Birdwell, 1965; Grubb, 1965). Although the problem is still topical enough, because in today's highly competitive environment the meaning of distinctive image in common, the image of product and especially brand image is most important.

As products become more complex and the marketplace more crowded, consumers rely more on the product's image than on its actual attributes in making purchase decisions (Schiffman, Kanuk, 1994).

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Self-concept

In this article we apply two key concepts, self-concept and self-image. Self-concept is a broader concept than self-image. We use the term self-image in cases of measurement of self-concept. Self-image does not include the self-evaluation and the self-reflection component, which are so characteristic of self-concept.

Self-concept can be defined as the totality of the individual's thoughts and feelings having reference to him- or herself as an object (Sirgy, 1982,2).

In other words, one's self-concept is composed of the attitudes one holds toward oneself (Hawkins, Best and Coney, 1995).

It should be pointed out that self-concept is not only the reflection of those factors which we conceive as non-material factors (i.e. education, family relationships, peer influence ...), but it is also the reflection of our material environment. This is what Belk (Belk, 1988) meant under the term of extended self.

The definition of self-concept

Some authors put the self-concept in relationship with perception (Schiffman & Kanuk, 1991; Foxall & Goldsmith, 1994), while others put it in relationship with life style (Hawkins, Best, Coney, 1995) or in the relationship with personality (Loudon & Della Bitta, 1993).

“Self-concept can be defined as the totality of the individual’s thoughts and feelings having reference to him or herself as an object” (Sirgy, 1982).

“The self-concept is, in fact, the personal or internal basis of the lifestyle or an individual, since the self-concept denotes the totality of ones attitudes, feelings, perceptions, and evaluations of oneself” (Hawkins, Best, Coney, 1989), and “Our self-concept is composed of the attitudes we hold toward ourselves” (Hawkins, Best, Coney, 1995).

Using self-concept

Deriving from the definition of the self-concept we can define the relationship between the consumers’ self-image on one side and product image, brand image, store image or advertising theme on the other (Figure 1).

An advantage of studying consumer behavior using the theory of self-concept is that consumers provide description of themselves, as opposed to having descriptions made by outside observers. That is, each consumer describes his or her own view of himself or herself, which is in contrast to personality tests that fit consumer responses into predetermined categories or traits. The distinction is important, because the way in which a consumer perceives himself or herself might differ substantially from the way in which the researcher sees or categorises same consumer (Loudon & Della Bitta, 1993).

The perception of self influences the goals and products which we are choosing. Products which we already have or we wish to have very often reflect the level of congruence with the individual’s self-image. The product which is perceived as congruent with the individual’s self-image has

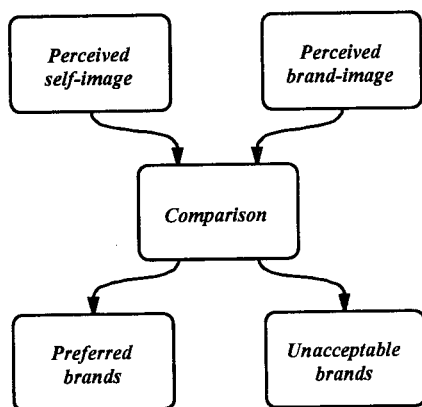


Figure 1. A model of the brand-choice process as a function of self-image and brand image (Loudon & Della Bitta, 1993)

greater probability of being chosen than a product which is not.

Similarly, Belk (Belk, 1988) says that our clothes, apartments and cars are treated as our “second skin”, in which others can see us.

Products and brands have symbolic value for individuals, who evaluate them on the basis of their consistency (i.e. congruence) with their personal pictures or images of themselves. Some products seem to match one or more of individual’s self images; others seem totally alien. It is generally held that consumers attempt to preserve or enhance their self images by selecting products with “images” or “personalities” they believe are congruent with their self images, and avoiding products that are not (Belk, 1988).

The structure of self-concept

According to Schiffman & Kanuk (Schiffman & Kanuk, 1994) a variety of different self-image constructs have been identified in the consumer behavior literature: the actual self-image (e.g., how consumers in fact see themselves), the ideal self-image (e.g., how consumers would like to see themselves), the social self-image (e.g., how consumers feel others see them) and the ideal social self-image (e.g., how consumers would like others to see them). Other researchers identified the fifth type of self-image, expected self-image (e.g., how consumers expect to see themselves at some specified future time). The expected self-image is somewhere between the actual and the ideal self image.

With the changing of self-image from the actual towards the expected or the future self-image the desired products or brands of products change, too.

The self-concept is not a uniform category. Regarding two basic dimensions: *actual versus ideal*, and, *private versus social* (with desired/expected self concept in the middle), self concept is divided in six basic parts (see Table 1).

Relationship between the self-concept and product purchase

The use of the self-concept is explained by the following logical sequence that leads to a relationship between the self-concept and product purchase and was stated by Grubb & Grathwohl (Grubb & Grathwohl, 1967):

1. An individual has a self-concept. The self-concept is formed through interaction with parents, peers, teachers, and significant others.
2. One’s self-concept is of value to the individual.

Table 1

Dimensions of self concept			
	Actual self-concept	Desired/expected self-concept	Ideal self-concept
Private self	How I actually see myself	How I desire/expect to see myself in future	How I would like to see myself
Social self	How others actually see me	What I think others desire/expect to see in me	How I would like others to see me

3. Because the self concept is valued, individuals strive to enhance their self-concept.
4. Certain products serve as a social symbols and communicate social meaning about those who own or use products.
5. The use of products as symbols communicates meaning to the self and to others, causing an impact on the individual's private and social self-concept.
6. As a result, individuals often purchase or consume products, services, and media to maintain or enhance a desired self-concept.

to obtain our ideal self-concept (or maintain our actual self-concept) often involve the purchase and consumption of products, services, and media (Hawkins, Best, Coney, 1995)

Measuring the self-image

The measuring of the self-concept does not represent a problem. The difficulties arise as soon as we want to compare self-image and product image. In this situation, each image must be measured by the same measure. To overcome this question, Malhotra (1981) developed a semantic differential scale (see Appendix A). It is useful for measuring a variety of images: self image, product/brand image and spokesperson image.

A very clear relation exists between the actual and ideal private self-concept and between the actual and ideal social self-concept. In both cases, we strive to move our real (actual) self-concept toward our ideal self-concept. Attempts

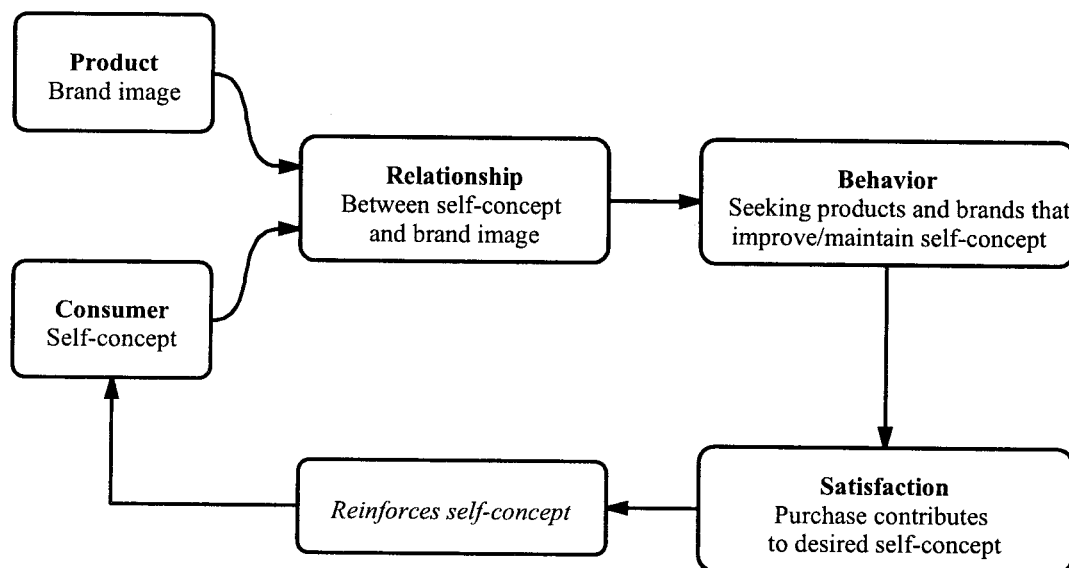


Figure 2. The relationship between self-concept and Brand Image Influence (Hawkins, Best, Coney, 1995)

METHOD

Four variables were included in this research:

- 1) actual self-image,
- 2) ideal self-image,
- 3) actual apartment furnishing image (the furnishing which respondents actually have at home),
- 4) desired apartment furnishing image.

Instrument

Self-image and product image were measured by the scale developed by Malhotra (1981).

The reliability of the scale was estimated by the test-retest method for ideal, actual, and social self-concept. All correlations were very significant. The average correlations for the ideal, actual, and social self-concept were .80, .70, and .68 respectively (Bruner, Hensel, 1992).

Factor analysis, cluster analysis, and regression analysis were used to help reduce a set of 27 items to the final list of 15. Convergent and discriminant validity was assessed using multitrait-multimethod approach. The two traits were cars and actors and the two methods were semantic differential and similarity ratings. Malhotra views the findings as indicating that the scale has reasonable convergent and discriminant validity (Bearden, Netemeyer, Mobley, 1993).

Participants

150 female students of the School of Business and Economics at the University of Maribor (age 20 and 21 years).

Procedure

The respondents estimated their actual self-image, ideal self-image, actual apartment furnishing image, and desired apartment furnishing image on the Malhotra's 15 item scale (Appendix B).

Hypotheses

The goal of investigation was examine the connection between self-image and apartment furnishing image. Four zero hypotheses were created:

H₁ = there exists no dependence between the actual self-image components and the components of desired apartment furnishing image.

H₂ = there exists no dependence between the ideal self-image components and the components of desired apartment furnishing image.

H₃ = there exists no dependence between the actual self-image components and the components of actual apartment furnishing image.

H₄ = there exists no dependence between the ideal self-image components and the components of actual apartment furnishing image.

To prove the hypotheses we used a canonical correlation calculating procedure. Canonical correlation shows the dependence between two sets of variables. In our case they were: (a) the set of variables describing the actual and the ideal self-image and (b) set of variables describing the actual and the desired image of apartment furnishing.

Applicability of the results

The results have both theoretical and practical value:

1) The first data which have practical value is the existence/non-existence of the connection between actual and/or ideal self image and image of desired and actual apartment furnishing.

This is important, because the promotional activities, for instance, for the products where there is a relation between the self-image and the product image, must differ from those related to the products where this relation does not exist.

2) The second data which are of value are dimensions, which are dependent, by the single root.

If we know these dimensions, we can emphasize only these relevant dimensions and not the irrelevant ones.

3) In the case that there exist more roots in the relation between self-image and brand image, this means the there exist more "types" of consumers with connections between self-image and brand image on the different dimensions of image.

We could form specific marketing mix for each "type of consumers" with only relevant dimensions for this "type of consumers". This approach can be very useful in the process of planning the products and promotion of the products.

RESULTS

Table 2

The means and standard deviations for each component of the four images.

components of image	ideal self image		actual self image		image of actual apartment furnishing		image of desired apartment furnishing	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Rugged/Delicate	7.75	1.54	7.11	1.38	6.61	1.83	7.12	1.51
Excitable/Calm	1.50	1.01	3.99	1.70	2.93	2.07	1.84	1.29
Uncomfortable/Comfortable	7.28	1.77	6.55	1.70	7.23	1.89	8.17	1.59
Dominating/Submissive	3.76	2.06	4.78	1.90	4.74	1.73	4.82	2.06
Thrifty/Indulgent	3.21	2.02	4.48	2.20	4.33	2.08	5.28	2.24
Pleasant/Unpleasant	1.63	1.40	3.28	1.49	2.46	1.66	1.70	1.41
Contemporary/Non contemporary	1.85	1.29	3.06	1.69	3.16	1.94	2.26	1.64
Organised/Unorganised	1.87	1.31	3.62	1.91	3.35	1.76	2.76	1.74
Rational/Emotional	3.52	2.26	5.21	2.50	4.18	1.95	4.80	2.18
Youthful/Mature	4.34	2.70	4.08	2.13	3.72	2.02	3.86	2.25
Formal/Informal	4.91	2.53	5.55	1.76	5.29	2.11	5.77	2.43
Orthodox/Liberal	6.88	1.90	6.71	1.57	6.59	1.66	6.85	1.72
Complex/Simple	7.12	1.93	5.44	2.05	6.57	1.80	6.69	2.07
Colourless/Colourful	7.72	1.50	6.71	1.33	6.73	1.87	7.47	1.64
Modest/Vain	3.78	2.19	4.27	1.87	5.17	2.02	5.81	1.94

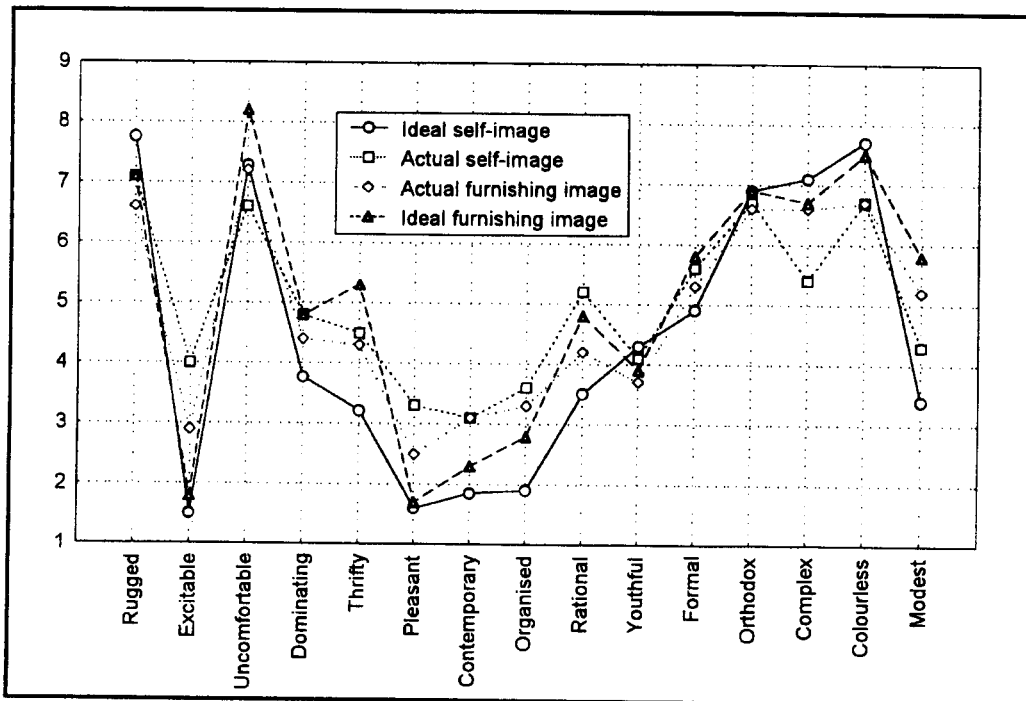


Figure 3. The profiles of the four images

Canonical correlation between the actual self-image and the desired apartment furnishing image

Table 3

Significance of connection between two sets of variables

	<i>A</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
Wilks	0.080	1.44	0.000

Table 4

Eigenvalues and canonical correlations

root number	eigenvalue	%	cum. %	can. corr.
1	.710	23.7	23.7	.644
2	.548	18.3	42.0	.595

Table 5

Canonical variables

	actual self image		desired apartment furnishing image	
	root 1	root 2	root 1	root 2
	Rugged/Delicate	-.216	.337	-.081
Excitable/Calm	-.098	.135	-.185	-.053
Uncomfortable/Comfortable	-.132	.241	.016	.132
Dominating/Submissive	-.126	.552	-.029	-.082
Thrifty/Indulgent	-.006	-.321	.274	-.474
Pleasant/Unpleasant	.296	-.132	-.083	.241
Contemporary/Non-cont.	.411	-.021	.279	-.014
Organised/Unorganised	.507	.144	.369	-.140
Rational/Emotional	.338	.300	.519	.250
Youthful/Mature	.008	-.225	-.002	-.408
Formal/Informal	.635	.143	.643	-.056
Orthodox/Liberal	-.147	.473	-.022	.199
Complex/Simple	.008	.425	.015	.298
Colourless/Colourful	-.330	.307	-.369	.382
Modest/Vain	-.175	-.267	-.244	-.437

First canonical root

Individuals who see themselves as contemporary, organised and formal wish to have rational and formal apartment furnishing.

Second canonical root

Individuals who see themselves as submissive, liberal and simple wish to have thrifty, youthful and modest apartment furnishing.

Canonical correlation between the ideal self image and the desired apartment furnishing image

Table 6

Significance of connection between two sets of variables

	<i>A</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
Wilks	.033	1.923	.000

Table 7

Eigenvalues and canonical correlations

root number	eigenvalue	%	cum. %	can. corr.
1	1.453	32.33	32.33	.770
2	.836	18.61	50.94	.675
3	.593	13.20	64.15	.610

Table 8

Canonical variables

	ideal self image			desired apartment furnishing image		
	root 1	root 2	root 3	root 1	root 2	root 3
	Rugged/Delicate	-.417	-.092	.209	-.367	-.163
Excitable/Calm	.101	-.167	-.382	.087	-.200	-.355
Uncomfortable/Comfortable	-.448	.021	.235	-.222	.011	.312
Dominating/Submissive	.029	.470	-.083	.141	.212	-.138
Thrifty/Indulgent	.640	-.209	-.172	.504	-.330	.219
Pleasant/Unpleasant	.197	-.105	-.384	.115	-.083	-.498
Contemporary/Non-cont.	.426	-.230	-.391	.370	-.412	-.098
Organised/Unorganised	.391	.086	-.542	.288	.104	-.389
Rational/Emotional	.448	-.158	.270	.354	-.096	.309
Youthful/Mature	.307	-.359	.002	.454	-.204	-.350
Formal/Informal	.751	.289	.260	.694	.109	.325
Orthodox/Liberal	-.289	-.272	-.261	-.144	-.372	-.109
Complex/Simple	-.175	.326	-.192	.065	.334	-.409
Colourless/Colourful	-.287	-.061	.382	-.310	.246	.214
Modest/Vain	.199	-.264	.079	.081	-.537	.061

First canonical root:

Individuals who wish to be delicate, comfortable, thrifty, contemporary, rational and formal wish to have thrifty, youthful and formal apartment furnishing.

Second canonical root:

Individuals who wish to be dominating wish to have non contemporary and vain apartment furnishing.

Third canonical root:

Individuals who wish to be organised wish to have pleasant and complex apartment furnishing.

Canonical correlation between the actual self image and the actual apartment furnishing image

Table 9

Significance of connection between two sets of variables

	A	F	P
Wilks	.081	1.437	.000

Table 10

Eigenvalues and canonical correlations

root number	eigenvalue	%	cum. %	can. corr.
1	.825	27.0	27.0	.672
2	.655	21.4	48.4	.629

Table 11

Canonical variables

	actual self image		actual apartment furnishing image	
	root 1	root 2	root 1	root 2
	Rugged/Delicate	-.378	.094	-.687
Excitable/Calm	-.124	-.350	.564	-.323
Uncomfortable/Comfortable	-.206	.104	.018	.433
Dominating/Submissive	.052	.103	.111	-.047
Thrifty/Indulgent	.228	-.502	.193	-.046
Pleasant/Unpleasant	.365	-.252	.512	-.162
Contemporary/Non-cont.	.410	-.178	.616	-.335
Organised/Unorganised	.709	-.086	.524	-.038
Rational/Emotional	.305	.205	.195	.168
Youthful/Mature	.222	-.059	.543	-.192
Formal/Informal	.248	.401	-.011	.345
Orthodox/Liberal	-.057	.279	-.518	.269
Complex/Simple	-.047	.225	-.031	.294
Colourless/Colourful	-.531	.022	-.297	.088
Modest/Vain	.099	-.661	-.158	-.510

First canonical root

Individuals who see themselves as contemporary, organised and colourful describe their apartment furnishing as delicate, excitable, pleasant, contemporary, organised, youthful and liberal.

Second canonical root

Individuals who see themselves as thrifty, informal and modest describe their apartment furnishing as comfortable and modest.

Canonical correlation between the ideal self-image and the actual apartment furnishing image

Table 12

Significance of connection between two sets of variables

	A	F	P
Wilks	.076	1.397	.000

Table 13

Eigenvalues and canonical correlations

root number	eigenvalue	%	cum. %	can. corr.
1	.685	22.5	22.5	.678
2	.509	16.7	39.2	.581

Table 14

Canonical variables

	ideal self image		actual apartment furnishing image	
	root 1	root 2	root 1	root 2
	Rugged/Delicate	.151	-.443	.132
Excitable/Calm	.351	.420	-.588	.183
Uncomfortable/Comfortable	-.008	-.195	.317	-.496
Dominating/Submissive	.191	-.063	.008	-.351
Thrifty/Indulgent	-.332	.085	.212	-.245
Pleasant/Unpleasant	.231	.171	-.285	.207
Contemporary/Non-cont.	.180	.443	-.278	.428
Organised/Unorganised	-.030	.437	.083	.370
Rational/Emotional	-.090	.384	.163	.320
Youthful/Mature	.289	-.051	.207	.286
Formal/Informal	-.117	-.273	-.084	-.262
Orthodox/Liberal	.226	.357	-.042	.038
Complex/Simple	-.201	.265	-.166	-.061
Colourless/Colourful	-.628	-.013	-.003	-.115
Modest/Vain	.156	-.088	.107	-.097

First canonical root:

Individuals who wish to be colourful describe their actual apartment furnishing as calm.

Second canonical root

Individuals who wish to be delicate, excitable, contemporary and organised describe their actual apartment furnishing as comfortable and contemporary.

Table 15

Percents of explained variance of the four comparisons of images

	Actual self-image	ideal self-image
desired apartment furnishing image	42.0	64.2
actual apartment furnishing image	48.4	39.2

According to results given in Table 15, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- the strongest connection exists between the ideal self-image and the desired apartment furnishing image,
- the weakest connection exists between the ideal self-image and the actual apartment furnishing image,
- the actual self-image is more strongly connected with the actual apartment furnishing than with the desired apartment furnishing, although the difference is not substantial.

Based on the results all four hypotheses were rejected:

- H₁** = there exists no dependence between the actual self-image components and the components of the desired apartment furnishing image.
The hypothesis was rejected (table 2).
- H₂** = there exists no dependence between the ideal self-image components and the components of the desired apartment furnishing image.
The hypothesis was rejected (table 5).
- H₃** = there exists no dependence between the actual self-image components and the components of the actual apartment furnishing image.
The hypothesis was rejected (table 8).
- H₄** = there exists no dependence between the ideal self-image components and the components of the actual apartment furnishing image.
The hypothesis was rejected (table 11).

CONCLUSION

In this research we compared the actual and desired self-image and the actual and desired apartment furnishing image.

The four hypotheses were rejected, thus a general conclusion can be drawn, that there exists the connection between self-image and apartment furnishing image.

In forming the marketing mix, the most reasonable decision is to include the ideal self-image and the desired apartment furnishing image (table 14), because in this combination the percent of the explained variance is the highest (64%).

From the tables 4, 7, 10 and 13, and the description of the canonical root we can see which items from the set describing the self-image are connected with which items describing the apartment furnishing image. These descriptions have strong practical value, because they represent the opportunity for making the very specific appeals by choosing only connected items.

The research, however, has several limitations: (1) the selection of the respondents - the results cannot be generalised, (2) the selection of the product (apartment furnishing) - with selecting some other product/product category we would probably get different results, (3) the selection of the items describing the images. Malhotra (1981) himself noticed, that the selection of items is not appropriate for all products. But due to the fact that the main goal of our investigation was to establish if the connection between the self-image and the apartment furnishing image exists, we decided to use the original Malhotra's scale.

In further research work it would be interesting to test the relation between actual and ideal self-image, apartment furnishing image and the respondents' impact on the furnishing of the apartment.

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Received October 1997
Accepted January 1998

APPENDIX A.

Measurement Scales for Self-Concepts, Person Concepts, and Product Concepts (Malhotra, 1981)

1.	Rugged	-	Delicate
2.	Excitable	-	Calm
3.	Uncomfortable	-	Comfortable
4.	Dominating	-	Submissive
5.	Thrifty	-	Indulgent
6.	Pleasant	-	Unpleasant
7.	Contemporary	-	Non-contemporary
8.	Organised	-	Unorganised
9.	Rational	-	Emotional
10.	Youthful	-	Mature
11.	Formal	-	Informal
12.	Orthodox	-	Liberal
13.	Complex	-	Simple
14.	Colourless	-	Colourful
15.	Modest	-	Vain

APPENDIX B

Scale administered for the measurement of self-image and product image (Malhotra, 1981)

1.	Rugged	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Delicate
2.	Excitable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Calm
3.	Uncomfortable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Comfortable
4.	Dominating	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Submissive
5.	Thrifty	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Indulgent
6.	Pleasant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Unpleasant
7.	Contemporary	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Non contemporary
8.	Organised	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Unorganised
9.	Rational	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Emotional
10.	Youthful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Mature
11.	Formal	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Informal
12.	Orthodox	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Liberal
13.	Complex	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Simple
14.	Colourless	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Colourful
15.	Modest	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Vain