



## Brand personality: Current insights and future research directions

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to improve the understanding of the scientific contributions made by brand personality (BP) research, to identify its predominant themes and to propose a relevant research agenda. An analysis was undertaken of the 1051 brand personality-related articles published over the period 1987–2022 that are indexed in the Scopus scientific database. A bibliometric approach was adopted to systematically analyse the publications, and a performance analysis and science mapping were undertaken. The results showed that the motor themes of BP research related to its conceptualisation, dimensions and measurement, its impact on consumer-brand relationships and application in tourism destination-focused studies. Emerging BP-focused themes are its applications in virtual reality, artificial intelligence, service robots, storytelling and tourism segments, such as luxury. This study contributes by providing a better understanding of the state-of-the-art research on BP, and by identifying future research directions.

### 1. Introduction

The first reference to “brand personality” (BP) in a scientific article was made by Aitken et al. (1987). In the following decade, Aaker and Fournier (1995) suggested that BP is an instrument of differentiation that might increase brand value. The most prominent definition of BP, proposed two years later by Aaker (1997), suggests that BP is “the set of human characteristics associated with a brand” (p. 347). Aaker (1997) made a seminal contribution to the theoretical foundation of BP and developed a measurement scale comprised of five dimensions influenced by the “Big Five” human personality framework (Norman, 1963): sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness.

Aaker’s (1997) work has influenced extensive research on consumer-brand relationships, attitudes towards brands (Helgeson & Supphellen, 2004), brand associations (Freling & Forbes, 2005), consumer preferences (Swaminathan et al., 2009), brand trust, affection felt towards brands (Sung & Kim, 2010), emotional attachment to brands (MacInnis & Folkes, 2017; Malär, et al., 2011), brand identification (Kuenzel & Halliday, 2010), purchase intentions (Freling et al. 2011), perceived quality (Ha & Janda, 2014), word-of-mouth (Tho et al., 2016) and brand loyalty (Molinillo et al., 2017). However, some authors, for example,

Madrigal and Boush (2008), have criticised Aaker’s (1997) work because social responsibility is not included among the BP dimensions. Similarly, Anandkumar and George (2011) question the transferability of the BP dimensions across different cultures. Given the weaknesses of Aaker’s BP framework, and the need to adjust the BP scale to different contexts, some authors have introduced alternative frameworks (d’Astous & Levesque, 2003; Geuens et al., 2009). Meanwhile, BP research has been extended into various research areas, such as tourism destinations (e.g., Ekinci & Hosany, 2006; Usakli & Baloglu, 2011), hotels (Leung & Law, 2010; Magnini & Thelen, 2008), restaurants (Siguaw et al., 1999; Lee et al., 2009), sports organisations (e.g., Carlson et al., 2009; Tsiotsou, 2012), retailing (Zentes et al., 2008; Da Silva & Alwi, 2006), fast-moving consumer goods (Hodge et al., 2015), consumer durables (Anisimova, 2007; Clemenz et al., 2012) and professional services (Smith, 2009; Guzmán & Sierra, 2009).

Thus, it can be concluded that BP research has undergone remarkable development, with important repercussions for the theory and practice of brand management since the 1990s. However, while the scientific output has been considerable, few works have analysed in depth the evolution of the BP literature. Therefore, the objective of the present study is three-fold: first, to improve the understanding of the

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scientific contributions made by BP research; second, to identify related predominant themes/topics and current research trends; and third, to propose a research agenda.

In doing so, the present study adopts a bibliometric approach to examine the scientific production of the BP research undertaken between 1987 and 2022, following Donthu et al.'s (2021a) guidelines. Bibliometric analysis is a rigorous method that allows researchers to explore and analyse a large amount of data from scientific publications, and to identify both the specific nuances of a topic's evolution and its emerging themes (Donthu et al., 2021b). The present study differs from previous works by conducting the most extensive examination, to date, of the BP-focused articles (1051) published between 1997 and 2022 that are indexed on the Scopus database (Appendix A. [Supplementary material](#)). For example, Ghorbani et al. (2022) analysed a shorter period, 2005–2021, and looked only at journals included in the CABS Academic Journal Guide (107 articles), while Llanos-Herrera and Merigo (2019) conducted an analysis of the period January 1995–April 2018, drawing on the Web of Science database, which covered only 435 articles. By examining the period up to the end of 2022, the present work includes production carried out in the extraordinary context of Covid-19, and updates the research agenda based on problems identified during that period. This approach provides a broader, more comprehensive view of the scientific contributions made to BP research, which will allow researchers to better understand the existing academic literature and to better target their future work to help advance the knowledge on BP.

To this end, this study will address the following BP-related research questions (RQs):

- RQ1: What is the performance (productivity and impact) of the relevant authors and journals?
- RQ2: What are the intellectual interactions and structural connections of authors and themes?
- RQ3: What research has underpinned BP?

By answering these questions, the present study will allow researchers and marketing professionals to gain a better understanding of BP and to identify future research that can contribute to the construction of scientific knowledge.

## 2. Methodology

This study adopts a bibliometric analysis methodology. This methodology provides an objective and systematic investigation of research progress (Chellappandi & Vijayakumar, 2018) by identifying motor themes, emerging trends, patterns of collaboration, the impact of articles and journals, and reveals the intellectual structure of a specific topic in the literature (Donthu et al., 2020; Donthu et al., 2021a; Verma & Gustafsson, 2020).

### 2.1. Bibliometric analysis

A literature review is a valuable study methodology that consolidates existing knowledge in a specific field; this consolidation supports and facilitates the development of new knowledge in the field. It is a retrospective view of the body of knowledge in a field that describes progress in the field and suggests possible future research directions. Lim et al. (2022) suggested that literature reviews are valuable in five ways: (1) they explain the need for future research, give it theoretical support and propose future research directions; (2) they give credit to scholars for work they have done in the past, discourage plagiarism and duplication of research and provide rapid, comprehensive knowledge of the field of study; (3) they demonstrate the appropriate use of previous theories and results and assess emerging fields, or mature fields still widely researched; (4) they can highlight the urgent need for future research, both because of the importance of the phenomenon under study and because of the limitations of previous studies; (5) they support and

facilitate the development of new knowledge by clarifying key concepts, providing an overview of the field of study, identifying important research gaps and by proposing suggestions that future researchers can adopt to advance the field of study.

Kraus et al. (2022) proposed a list of methods to use when analysing previous literature. Of the methods listed, the present study adopts bibliometric analysis, which uses quantitative indicators, statistical techniques and software to examine the biographical data of scientific production (Donthu et al., 2021a). Bibliometric analysis was chosen, over other methods, because it allows researchers to process large amount of data to identify possible “hidden patterns”, which provides a better understanding of the state of art in a research field, its evolution and gaps (Kraus et al., 2022). Bibliometric studies tend to be more objective and more far-reaching than other types of review (Donthu et al., 2021a). For example, meta-analyses can also explore large amounts of data, but require studies to be homogeneous and unbiased, otherwise the validity of the results may be compromised (Donthu et al., 2021a). In addition, while content analysis or systematic reviews are recommended when the scope of a study is limited, and/or when a dataset is sufficiently small and manageable that its content can be manually reviewed using quantitative and qualitative techniques, or using software that allows semi-automatic analysis (Kraus et al., 2022), this is not the case in the present study.

Mukherjee et al. (2022) also argued that bibliometric research contributes to knowledge development, again in five ways: (1) it promotes the objective identification of knowledge groups; (2) it clarifies the state of a field of study by identifying key concepts and their relationships (nomological networks); (3) it maps social patterns that explain the social processes that support knowledge development; (4) it recognises evolutionary nuances that explain where the study field is headed (e.g., declining and emerging topics); (5) it identifies key knowledge gaps, which can guide future research.

Bibliometric analysis is largely based on descriptive indicators and network analyses. The two fundamental reference criteria for assessing research are productivity and number of citations received (Podsakoff et al., 2008). Co-citation analysis is based on the belief that researchers cited in the same article are very likely to be discussing related or similar ideas (Boyack & Klavans, 2010). This analysis places weights on relationships based on their strength. A high value indicates the tendency of certain journals and authors to be co-cited in the same article. Using the clustering technique, analytical software can create a co-citation matrix that shows the groupings of directly related articles (Waltman & Van Eck, 2012). In this instance, the Leiden technique was applied, given that it is a very effective way of identifying connected groups and, when the method is followed repeatedly, it successfully disaggregates the relevant subsets of all groups/communities (Traag et al., 2019).

Topic mapping analysis, which identifies hidden themes, is a very useful and recommended instrument for conducting bibliometrics and text mining (Yan et al., 2012). The analysis is carried out using a methodology that transforms hidden, undetectable, covert and/or non-obvious topics, within large bodies of bibliographic materials, into graphs that depict clusters of topics and the relationships between the topics (Van Eck & Waltman, 2010). Finally, one of the most important techniques in bibliometrics is overlay visualisation. This instantly identifies trends and accurately represents the chronological development of topics (Leydesdorff & Bornmann, 2012).

### 2.2. Analytical tools used

To undertake the bibliometric analysis three of the most popular software were employed: VOSviewer, Bibliometrix and SciMAT. VOSviewer was used to carry out the bibliometric mapping and text mining (Van Eck et al., 2010) (Appendix B. [Supplementary material](#)). In a complementary way, the Bibliometrix software creates diagrams that reveal the degree of development (density) and the degree of relevance (centrality) of topics (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). In addition, SciMAT, a

powerful software that performs science mapping analysis within longitudinal frameworks (Cobo et al., 2012), was used to analyse the themes that developed over the three periods under study.

2.3. Data collection

The data used for the bibliometric analysis were collected from the Scopus database, one of the most comprehensive and reliable databases of scientific publications (Harzing & Alakangas, 2016). Journal articles were used as the unit of analysis for the selection of documents, on the basis that they been considered to be the most up-to-date sources of knowledge in the field of business and management and are the unit most frequently used in bibliometric studies (Donthu et al., 2021a; Rojas-Lamorena et al., 2022). The search query “Brand Personality” entered into Scopus identified 1051 works published up to December 31, 2022. Using information extracted from the identified articles a database was created with the following items: author(s), country of affiliation, title, abstract, keywords, journal, date of publication and citations. The data were cleaned and treated to amend incomplete records and to adapt the format before importing them into the software. Similarly, a thesaurus was developed to homogenise singular and plural words (e.g., consumer and consumers) and words with spelling differences depending on the use of British or American English (e.g., behaviour and behavior). In addition, a process of checking and standardising the names of journals and authors was carried out, as sometimes the journals themselves were described differently, for example, “Journal of Product & Brand Management” vs. “Journal of Product and Brand Management”, and authors were identified in different ways, for example, “Loureiro, S.” vs. “Loureiro, SMC”.

Fig. 1 shows the performance analysis, science mapping and network analysis used in the study.

3. Results

3.1. Performance analysis

The first article which discussed BP appeared in the Scopus database in 1987 (i.e., Aitken et al., 1987). The number of published articles was largely insignificant until 2002. Only 16 were published in fifteen years. Since 2002, a cumulative total of 1035 articles have been published, 111 of them in 2022.

In relation to RQ1, Fig. 2 shows the evolution of the scientific production on BP and citations received per year in the period 1987–2022. Although the evolution of annual production was progressively positive throughout the whole period, the volume of citations received by the works was clearly higher in years in which important contributions to the literature were made. For example, in 1997 the seminal work of Aaker (1997) was published. This work, for the first time, proposed dimensions for BP, and attracted 3365 citations, 96.1% of the total citations received by the three relevant articles published that year. Similarly, Fournier (1998) received 4132 citations. The emergence of tourism-related BP, supported by Hosany et al. (2006) and Ekinci and Hosany (2006), received 475 and 438 citations, respectively. A total of 2495 citations were shared among 15 articles published in 2006. Finally, Brakus et al. (2009), who examined BP’s relationship with another important construct (brand experience), deserves special mention, given that it received 42.10% of the total citations (4760) shared by the 40 articles published in 2009.

As to the most prolific and cited contributors, 2670 authors from 75 different countries produced the 1051 articles. Appendix A, supplementary material, shows the most prolific BP authors. The research impact measured by the number of citations received is not proportional to the number of articles published. That is, the most productive authors, for example, Sung (14) and Rojas-Méndez (9), are not among the most cited authors. The more cited authors who produced fewer articles are Fournier, Aaker, Schmitt, Zarantonello and Brakus, among others.

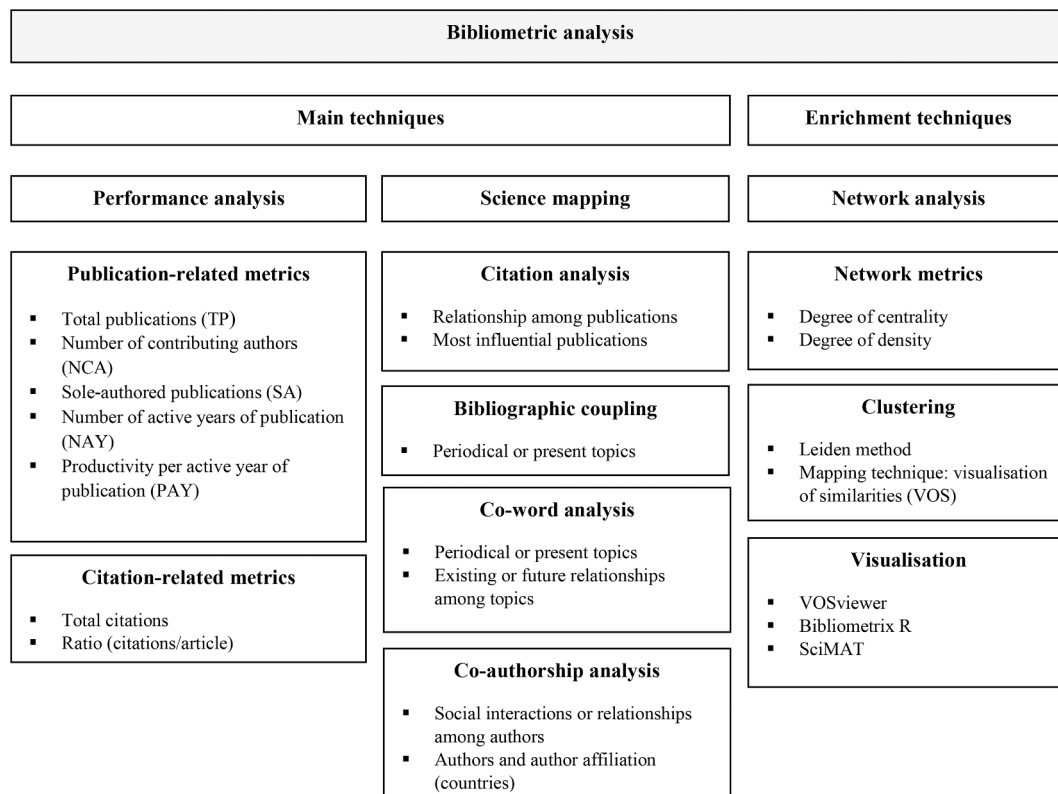


Fig. 1. Outline of techniques used in the bibliometric analysis.

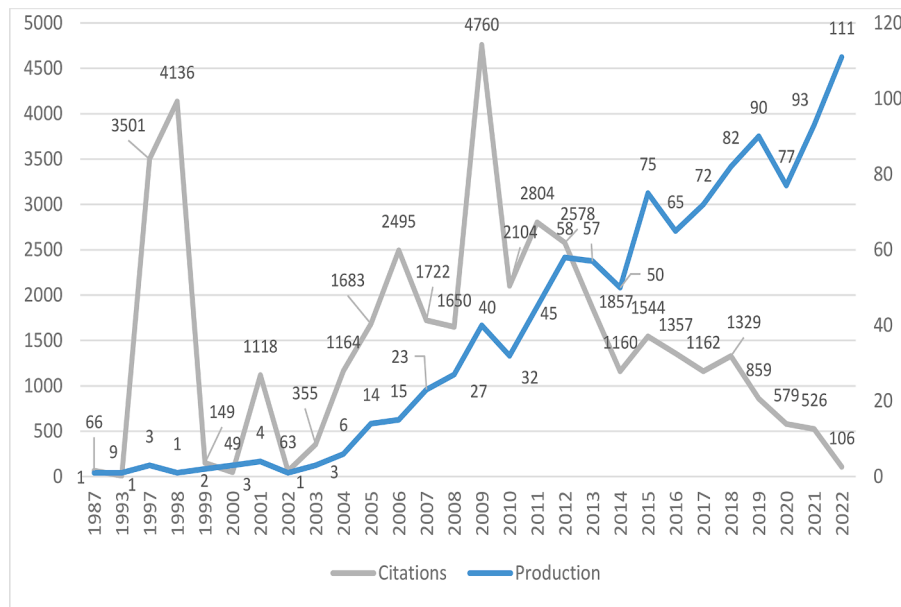


Fig. 2. Evolution in the number of articles on BP, and citations.

Therefore, it may be concluded that the number of citations received by an author depends on various factors, such as the journal impact ratio, the type of journal, the open access coverage, the originality of the contribution and the age of the publication.

BP articles have appeared in 399 journals specialised in different topics, such as marketing, branding, consumer behaviour and tourism. This is an indication of the breadth of interest in BP. However, publications have been concentrated on a small number of journals, such that the top 10 with the highest output ( $\geq 11$ ) published 21.12% of the total articles (Appendix A. Supplementary material). Each of the top 3 (*Journal of Brand Management*, *Journal of Business Research* and *Journal of Product and Brand Management*) published more than 30 papers, followed by *Psychology and Marketing* (28), and *European Journal of Marketing* (21). The journals with the highest number of citations are *Journal of Business Research* with 3187 (40 articles published), *Journal of Product and Brand Management* with 2048 (40 articles published) and *Psychology and Marketing*, with 1504 citations (28 articles published).

We assessed the impact of articles on the literature through number of citations received (Table 1). The two most cited articles include

seminal works in the construction of the theoretical framework of BP by Fournier (1998) and Aaker (1997). The former contributed to consumer-brand relationships, and the latter to the measurement of BP. Both works were used as key references for studies in the following two decades, during which BP research clearly took off. Works undertaken during those years laid the foundations of BP and made an important impact on the literature, as evidenced by the fact that 8 of the 10 most cited articles on BP were published in that period. Among these (in addition to the two key articles previously discussed), were notable contributions made by Aaker et al. (2001), who used the BP scale to show the cross-cultural significance of brand consumption. Aaker et al. (2004) examined the impact of BP on consumer-brand relationships. Pappu et al. (2005) introduced a consumer-based brand equity scale. Kressmann et al. (2006) analysed the effects of self-congruence on brand loyalty. Hosany et al. (2006) and Ekinci and Hosany (2006) examined BP in tourism destinations, a novel application at that time. In addition, two of the top 10 articles published between 2007 and 2016 integrated BP into two emerging constructs, brand experience (Brakus et al., 2009) and brand attachment (Malär et al., 2011). It should be noted that the ranking of

Table 1

Top 10 articles in terms of citations received included in the Scopus database (ordered by total citations).

Pos.	Title	Author(s)	Year	Journal	Citations	Citations/year
1	Consumers and their brands: Developing relationship theory in consumer research	Fournier S.	1998	Journal of Consumer Research	4132	165.28
2	Dimensions of Brand Personality	Aaker J.L.	1997	Journal of Marketing Research	3365	129.42
3	Brand Experience: What Is It? How Is It Measured? Does It Affect Loyalty?	Brakus J.J., Schmitt B.H., Zarantonello L.	2009	Journal of Marketing	2004	143.14
4	When good brands do bad	Aaker J., Fournier S., Brasel S.A.	2004	Journal of Consumer Research	894	47.05
5	Emotional brand attachment and Brand Personality: The relative importance of the actual and the ideal self	Malär L., Krohmer H., Hoyer W.D., Nyffenegger B.	2011	Journal of Marketing	678	56.50
6	Consumption symbols as carriers of culture: A study of Japanese and Spanish Brand Personality constructs	Aaker J.L., Benet-Martínez V., Garolera J.	2001	Journal of Personality and Social Psychology	582	26.45
7	Direct and indirect effects of self-image congruence on brand loyalty	Kressmann F., Sirgy M.J., Herrmann A., Huber F., Huber S., Lee D.-J.	2006	Journal of Business Research	547	32.18
8	Consumer-based brand equity: improving the measurement – empirical evidence	Pappu R., Cooksey R.W., Quester P.G.	2005	Journal of Product & Brand Management	495	27.50
9	Destination image and destination personality: An application of branding theories to tourism places	Hosany S., Ekinci Y., Uysal M.	2006	Journal of Business Research	475	27.94
10	Destination personality: An application of Brand Personality to tourism destinations	Ekinci Y., Hosany S.	2006	Journal of Travel Research	438	25.76

the top 10 publications would change if the performance metric was changed to average number of citations received annually, rather than total number of citations received.

### 3.2. Co-citation link analysis

Regarding RQ2, co-citation link analysis identifies relationships between authors (Fig. 3). This analysis is based on the idea that two articles or authors are related when they appear in the reference list of a third article. Articles that are cited together will most likely address related ideas/topics. In the co-citation analysis of the BP database four clusters were identified. Cluster 1 (red) includes authors who provided the fundamental theoretical basis of BP. In this cluster are J. L. Aaker (1654 co-citations), with her work on the conceptualisation of BP, Fournier (678 co-citations) for her contribution about consumer-brand relationships, and Sirgy (646 co-citations) for his contribution to the theory of self-congruence. Cluster 2 (green) includes authors who have made notable contributions to the development of the theoretical frameworks of brand management, brand performance and brand equity. Among them are Keller (982 co-citations), D. Aaker (663 co-citations) and Chernatony (308 co-citations). Cluster 3 (yellow) groups authors with a special interest in topics related to tourism and tourist destinations. Particularly noteworthy are pioneers in the adaptation of the BP construct to tourism destinations, Ekinci (387 co-citations), Hosany (281 co-citations) and Baloglu (251 co-citations). Cluster 4 (blue) includes authors who analysed psychological variables, for example, perceptions of personality traits, attitudes and emotions in the context of communications, advertising and virtual communities, such as Sung (417 co-citations) and Supphellen (208 co-citations), or that adapted pre-existing BP frameworks to other areas (e.g., culture), such as Bénét Martínez (260 co-citations), Azoulay (228 co-citations) and Geuens (223 co-citations).

### 3.3. Brand personality conceptualisation and measurement

Aaker (1997) led to the emergence of a fruitful line of research in which authors focused much of their efforts on the validation of the original BP measurement scale in different contexts, its adaptation and, indeed, on proposing new conceptualisations and measurement scales (Appendix A. Supplementary material). Nonetheless, it should be noted

that Aaker's (1997) BP scale has received much criticism about its reliability and validity across different sectors and cross cultures (Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003; Geuens et al., 2009; Austin et al., 2003). There is no consensus whether it is necessary to develop different measurement scales for some contexts, or whether it is possible to use the same scale for all contexts.

Regarding the cultural adaptation of the measurement scale, the vocabulary used in a language is the most important source for describing brand personality (Caprara et al., 2001), and the dimensions of BP may contain important nuances based on culture. The psychological approach has allowed researchers to develop BP scales, but only from the point of view of western cultures. Therefore, the interrelation and interdependence of brands in an international and globalised context requires that a cross-cultural multipurpose validation of BP scales be undertaken. Studies have suggested that some BP-related factors are culture specific, for example, "ruggedness" in the United States, and "passion" in Spain (Aaker et al., 2001). A Korean study into BP, based on world-renowned brands, such as Nike and Adidas, identified two BP dimensions specific to that culture, "passive likeableness" and "ascendancy" (Sung & Tinkham 2005). Hofstede and McCrae (2004) argued that the weight of the Big Five personality factors can differ between cultures. In this sense, Cheung et al. (2008) argued that, although the structure of the five dimensions has been confirmed in different cultural environments, the features that make up each dimension can harbour specific culture-specific components. In addition, questioning even the number of dimensions, Hofstede (2007) argued that Aaker's (1997) five major dimensions should be expanded to include "dependence on others" in Asia-based studies. On the same lines, Schmitt et al. (2007) suggested that, while research using the same group of items has shown the validity of the five-dimensional structure of BP in many cultures, this does not mean they are the only dimensions of personality (Schmitt et al., 2007).

Beyond the application of BP in different sectors and/or cultural contexts, some relatively recent BP-focused studies have begun to examine the digital environment due to its increased importance as a channel of contact with consumers. The first such studies examined websites and online stores (e.g., Opoku et al., 2006), and these were followed by research into social networks (e.g., Pentina et al., 2013), digital products and services (e.g., Liu & Yan, 2022), and interactions with smart objects and artificial intelligence-powered devices (e.g.,

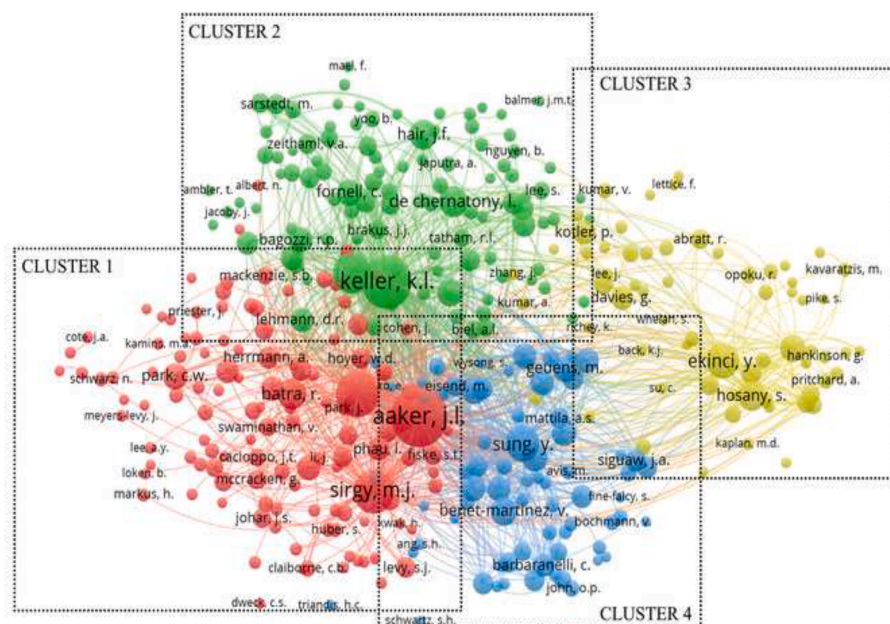


Fig. 3. Co-citation analysis by author.

chatbots, voice assistants, robots) (e.g., Vernuccio et al., 2022); in online contexts, studies also examined augmented reality and virtual reality. In this sense, one of the first works, Müller and Chandon (2003), concluded that consumers' perceptions of two dimensions of BP (youthfulness and modernity; sincerity and confidence) were enhanced after they were exposed to a brand's website. Pentina et al. (2013) showed that similarity in personality traits between Twitter users and the Twitter brand built trust in the platform. More recently, Paschen et al. (2017) found that the personality of an online brand community, rather than the personality of the brand itself, can be deduced from the communications that occur within the community. Hu et al. (2019) developed a predictive model of BP (measured through the Aaker (1997) scale) based on information available on social media. In the context of digital services (i.e., knowledge services), Liu and Yan (2022) demonstrated that brand personality positively influences brand love. Regarding new touchpoints, Youn and Jin (2021) showed that the type of relationship consumers establish with chatbots (virtual assistantship versus virtual friendship) influences their perceptions of a brand's personality. Ghorbani et al. (2022), in their systematic literature review of consumers' perceptions of digital brands' personalities, highlighted the need to broaden the topic's theoretical foundations.

Arora and Stoner (2009) made the criticism that most BP-focused studies used only quantitative scales and fail to combine the results of qualitative and quantitative methodologies when identifying BP dimensions (e.g., some dimensions identified in quantitative analyses are not identified in qualitative analyses). Similarly, it has been observed that some respondents find it difficult to understand the fundamental bases of BP when they are asked to think of brands as if they were people (Avis, 2012). On the same lines, Capelli and Jolibert (2009) even questioned the validity of the metaphor which attributes personality traits to brands, which calls into question the entire conceptual development of BP.

On the other hand, in parallel with the development of the BP construct, in recent years studies have gone even further than the seminal ideas of Aaker and Fournier (1995) by suggesting brands not only possess personality characteristics, but can also be perceived as if they were actual human beings. Guido and Peluso (2015) developed a three-dimensional brand anthropomorphism scale (human body lineaments, human facial physiognomy and self-brand congruity) and demonstrated its predictive power in terms of BP and brand loyalty. Subsequently, Portal et al. (2018) developed a theoretical model to guide managers through the process of building more human brands from brand traits, brand attributes and brand authenticity, which provides brands with benefits (loyalty, reputation and customer relationships). Golosenko et al. (2020) developed and validated a 4-dimensional measurement scale for the construct brand anthropomorphism (appearance, moral virtue, cognitive experience and conscious emotionality), which has been shown to be a good predictor of other constructs, such as brand trust and brand commitment. On the same lines, Kim et al. (2020) showed that when an anthropomorphised brand interacts with consumers on social networks it is perceived as trustworthy, it generates more "likes" (than non-anthropomorphised brands) and improves the attitude of consumers towards the brand.

### 3.4. Dominant methodologies

The methodology used in the articles was, in general, quite similar. Although the most cited article, Fournier (1998), collected qualitative data through interviewing three consumers, quantitative methodologies gathering data through surveys have been predominant in the BP literature. Aaker (1997) collected data using a survey including five-point Likert scales from a representative sample of the USA population. Aaker et al. (2001) examined how symbolic and expressive attributes associated with brands varied across three cultures (Spanish, Japanese, USA) using personally administered surveys. Similarly, Aaker et al. (2004) used online surveys to examine consumer-brand relationships.

Using telephone surveys, Kressmann et al. (2006) evaluated the direct and indirect effects of personal image congruence on consumer behaviour. Hosany et al. (2006) used personally administered surveys to evaluate the relationship between destination image and destination personality in the UK. Malär et al. (2011) examined the implications of self-congruence and consumer attachment to brands through online surveys in Switzerland.

The huge growth in the number of active users on social networks has provided a new source of particularly rich information, which has led to the emergence of qualitative studies using techniques such as semantic analysis, textual and narrative analysis and storytelling. For example, Masiello et al. (2020) undertook a qualitative analysis, based on a free-listing psychological meaning approach, to understand the design and management of the BP of social-media based festivals, and how the concept is communicated to, and perceived by, users. Subsequently, they performed a content analysis of tweets and posts using NVivo11 software. Chakraborty and Bhat (2018) used netnography - another qualitative method - to assess the impact of online reviews on BP. Ramadan (2019) used an inductive thematic analysis to analyse followers' comments on Twitter. Finally, some researchers have developed specific tools for assessing BP in social networks, as was the case with Liu et al. (2016), who created a visual analysis, named SocialBrands, to help brand managers understand public perceptions of brands on social media.

### 3.5. Thematic analysis

Co-word analysis was used to develop a map of the most important topics in BP research and their relationships. This technique examines the content of publications on the basis that words that frequently appear together are thematically related. The words used in co-word analysis were drawn from the "author keywords" and the "keyword co-occurrences" of the "article titles" and "abstracts", following a recommended methodology frequently applied in the literature (e.g., Baker et al., 2020; Burton et al., 2020; Donthu et al., 2020; Emich et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2019).

Using the text mining algorithms of the VOSviewer software, 17017 BP-related terms were identified. The treatment set a minimum frequency of 10 times. Subsequently, the software chose, by default, 60% of the most relevant terms and represented them through different coloured clusters based on their co-occurrence, or coincidence, in the same article. The greater the co-occurrence, the greater is the identification with the cluster. The diameter of the circles represents the frequency at which words appear, the larger the circle, the greater the frequency.

#### 3.5.1. Key research topics clustering

The analysis of the intellectual structure of research into BP produced four very different clusters (Fig. 4): a set of works that provided the theoretical basis for research into the subject, such as measurement scales and BP dimensions (blue cluster); another group in which research relates a wide range of topics related to communication and purchase intention, among others (red cluster); a third group which addressed methodologies and brand relationship constructs (e.g., trust, attachment, identification); and a fourth group strongly focused on the application of BP to tourist destinations (Appendix C, [supplementary material](#)).

#### 3.5.2. Key research topics evolution

The BP research topics identified in the four clusters had an uneven evolution over time. For the purpose of this analysis the research timeframe (1987–2022) was divided into four periods, the first three decades and the final six years. However, as only two of the 1051 articles in the database were published between 1987 and 1996, it does not make sense to graphically represent the period. The first work published was Aitken et al. (1987), which analysed children's perceptions of brand personality in tobacco advertising. Six years later, Stern (1993) defined

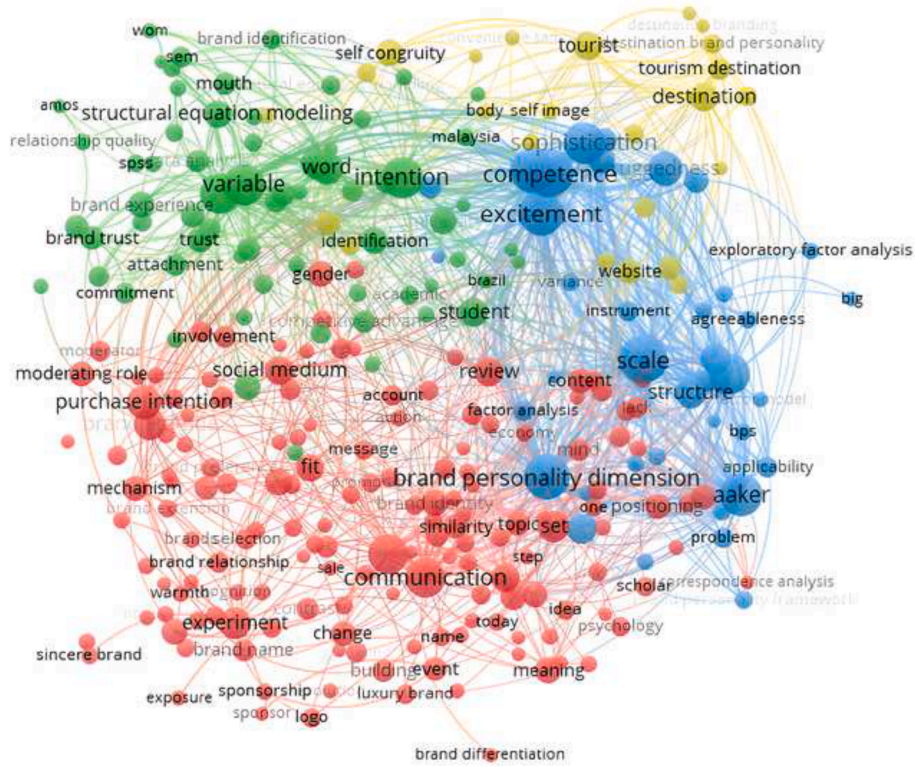


Fig. 4. Topic mapping and clustering based on affinities.

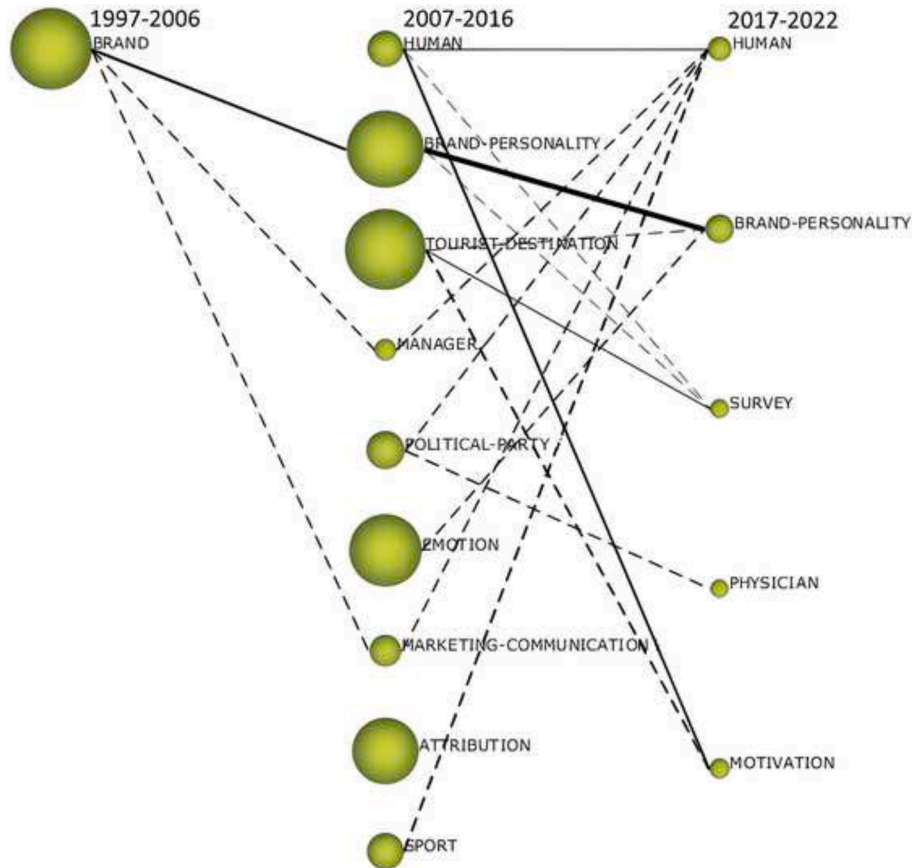


Fig. 5. Longitudinal evolution map.

the concept of the “persona” and its relationships with brand personality and brand image in the context of advertising. Therefore, the main research focus of BP in this period was perceived brand personality through advertising.

The examination of the evolution of the themes and findings was carried out through an analysis of the longitudinal evolution of the themes over the three main periods (from 1997 onwards) and of the strategic diagram produced for each period. The longitudinal analysis was undertaken, using SciMAT software (Fig. 5), through the co-occurrence of keywords. Each node, or sphere, is a theme, or set of keywords, which appear adjacent to the word with most centrality. The size of the sphere is proportional to the number of items in the set. A solid line indicates that themes appear in two periods, or that a theme which appears in one period also appears in the thematic network of a keyword in the other period, because both are researched from a related perspective. A dashed line indicates that both sets of themes have topics in common. The thickness of the line (solid or dashed) is proportional to the degree of co-occurrence of the keywords in the sets and indicates the strength of the association between topics. As can be seen, most of the relationships are represented with dashed lines, which denotes that there is a lack of cohesion or continuity between the themes over the periods; but, at the same time, it also denotes that relationships between the themes existed. The evolution of the second period (the first represented) to the third period (second represented) is very simple because in the second only a “brand” theme was generated, which is joined by a continuous line to “brand personality” (because the brand theme is in BP’s thematic network) and by a discontinuous line with “manager” and “marketing-communication”, because they share topics. In addition, new, very important, themes appear, that is, works addressing “tourism-destination”, “emotion” and “attribution”, along with other, less important themes, such as “human” and “sport”. In the fourth period (the third represented), less important themes, such as “survey” and “physician”, appear. Some themes, such as “brand personality” and “human”, continue from the third (second represented) to the fourth period (third represented), while others published in the third period are included in the thematic networks of other research topics in the fourth, such as “human” and “motivation”; it can be observed that over these two periods many relationships exist between dissimilar themes, but that have topics in common, such as “political-parties” and “physician”, and “sport” and “human”.

The relative prominence of each topic can be observed in the Bibliometrix-based strategic diagram. The diagram has two axes, degree of development (density) -vertical- and degree of relevance (centrality)

-horizontal. Density “measures the internal strength of the keywords or thematic network, while centrality refers to the degree of interaction between different networks” (Rojas-Lamorena et al., 2022, p. 1070). The intersection of the two axes creates four categories of themes: niche themes, motor themes, emerging/declining themes and basic and transversal themes. The authors’ “keywords” were taken as references in the development of the diagram as they are an exhaustive and concrete indicator of an article’s content (Zhang et al., 2016).

Fig. 6 is the strategic diagram of the second period (1997–2006). This period accounts for 4.95% of BP publications (52/1051) and, more importantly, 35.97% of total citations of all BP-focused output. Eight of the 10 most cited articles between 1987 and 2022 were published in this period. This reflects the impact that the pioneering and innovative work undertaken during this stage has had on the development of BP’s theoretical and conceptual framework. The Bibliometrix clustering process identified as motor themes of research into BP: the conceptualisation of the construct; the empirical validation of BP’s theoretical framework (Fournier, 1998; Govers & Schoormans 2005; Siguaw et al., 1999; Supphellen & Grønhaug, 2003); brand advertising; corporate branding; brand loyalty and marketing communications. Investigation of the relationships between BP, brand image and brand identity were fundamental for brand management. The end of the period saw three themes emerge that were clearly related to the application of BP to the management of tourism destinations, that is, destination branding, destination image and destination personality (Ekinci & Hosany, 2006; Hosany et al., 2006).

Scientific publications about BP grew exponentially in the third period (2007–2016), indicating the development and consolidation of this scholarly topic. Half (44.91%) of the total BP production (472/1051) was published during this period. The strategic diagram (Fig. 7) depicts a wide range of topics, although no motor theme other than brand communication is clearly highlighted. Tourism-related themes (destination branding and destination personality) passed from being emerging themes at the end of the previous decade to basic themes in this period (Murphy et al., 2007; Usakli & Baloglu, 2011; Gomez Aguilar et al., 2016). Other basic topics were brand image, brand identity and brand management, which developed a little more in this phase than in the previous period. Further topics that stand out in the centre of the diagram are purchase intentions, product involvement, trust and perceived quality. Finally, corporate branding lost importance in this period, while perceived sponsorship fit emerged.

The fourth and final period (2017–2022) represents the consolidation of the BP research stream. In just six years, 49.95% of the total articles

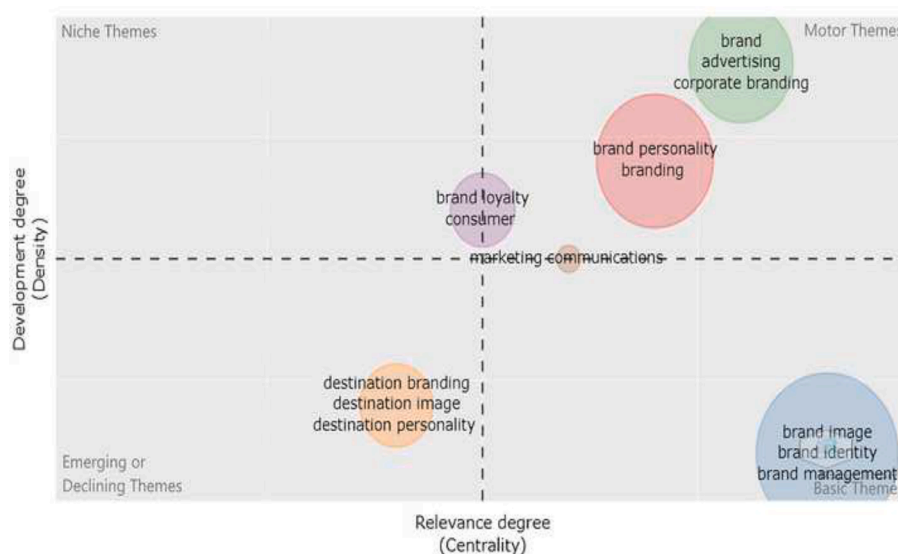


Fig. 6. Strategic diagram for the period 1997–2006.

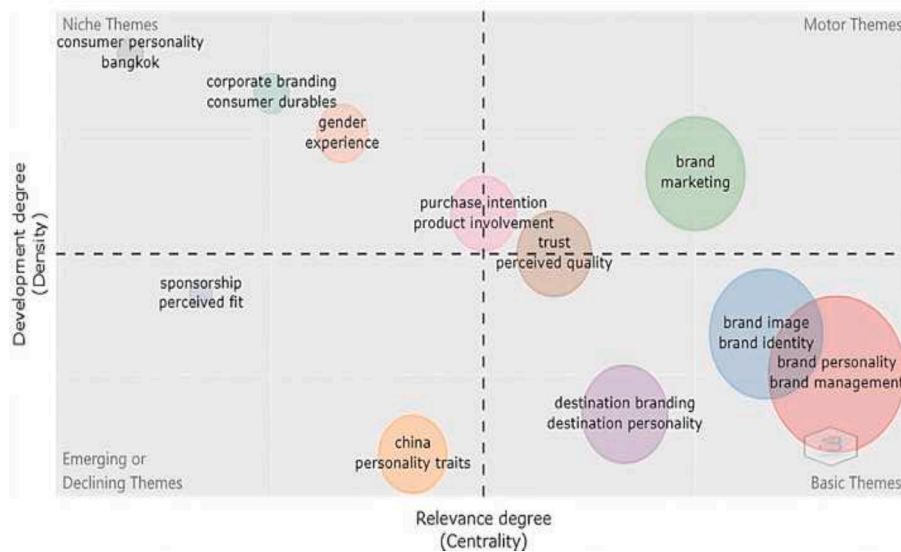


Fig. 7. Strategic diagram for the period 2007–2016.

(525/1051) were published, although their impact has been quite small given that they account for only 11.15% of total citations. This could be interpreted as an expansion of production but, at the same time, as showing the weakness of the most recent research given the absence of works that became references in the evolution of the discipline. This interpretation should be treated with caution, since measuring impact in terms of number of citations can be misleading given that many publications appeared only in recent years. Over this period the motor themes were generic branding (as in the previous phase), consumer behaviours and brand evaluation (Hassey, 2019) (Fig. 8). New basic BP-focused research themes emerged, such as brand loyalty (Mekhum & Sriupayo, 2020), brand experience (Japutra & Molinillo, 2019) and the social media context (Borges-Tiago et al., 2019; Peco-Torres et al., 2020). Tourism-related issues (e.g., destination brand personality) continued to develop as basic themes. At the opposite extreme, as niche themes, concepts such as consumer involvement (Lee & Kim, 2018), brand relationships (Nobre & Simões, 2019), quality (Nikhashemi et al., 2017) and word-of-mouth (Carpentier et al., 2019) appeared, while an emerging theme was political brand personality (Gopal & Verma, 2018).

Appendix D, supplementary material, provides additional information on production for each of the three main periods (from 1997 onwards). In addition, as a complement to the Bibliometrix-based longitudinal thematic analysis, Table 2 summarises the main performance indicators and the predominant topics in each period.

### 3.6. Research agenda

The analysis of the four thematic clusters and the strategic topic diagrams, together with the new trends proposed in the International Marketing Trends Conference (Garofano et al., 2022), lead us to put forward a future research agenda (Table 3) for BP in which the following important topics would feature.

### 3.7. Technology

Technology will be a transversal axis that will affect the development of future BP-related studies. Topics related to the consumer's interactions with virtual and augmented reality, big data, artificial

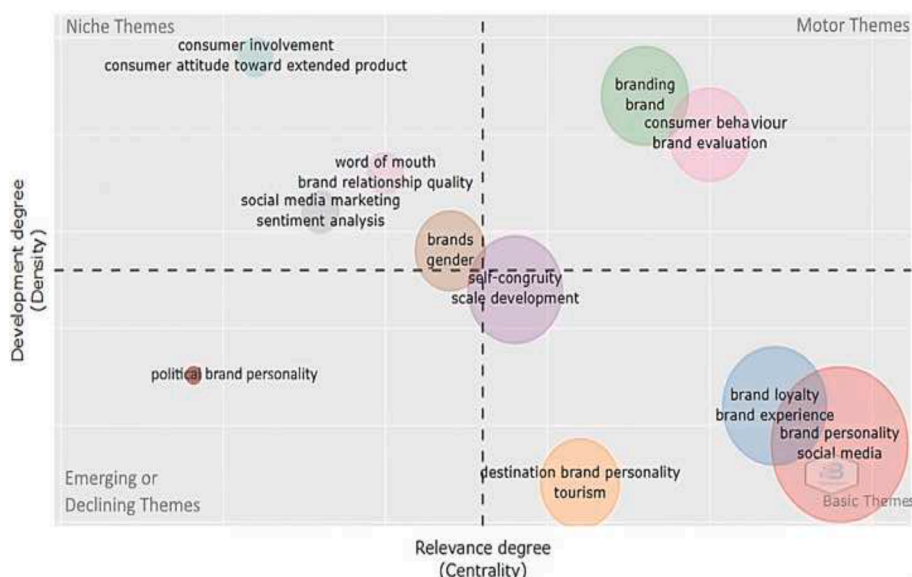


Fig. 8. Strategic diagram for the period 2017–2022.

**Table 2**  
Summary of the longitudinal analysis of BP production and predominant topics.

Period	Prod.	% Prod. total	Citations	% Total citations	Predominant topics
1987–1996	2	0.19%	75	0.18%	Communications
1997–2006	52	4.95%	14709	35.97%	Concept, Dimensions, Scale Consumers and Brands Cultural/ Transcultural Differences Tourist Destinations and Destination Image
2007–2016	472	44.91%	21552	52.70%	Tourist Destinations Consumers and Brands Concept and Scales Cultural/ Transcultural Differences Digital-online Social Networks Non-profit Organisations Fashion and luxury brands Political Parties Sports
2017–2022	525	49.95%	4561	11.15%	Purchase Intentions Social Networks Tourism + Online Non-profit Organisations Fashion and luxury brands Machine Learning
Total	1051	100%	40897	100%	

intelligence, 5G technologies, metaverse, etc., will be addressed (Plotkina et al., 2021). Researchers can contribute by analysing BP (conceptualisation, measurement and results) in the consumer’s interactions with these types of technology in omnichannel contexts. For example,

**Table 3**  
Research agenda summary.

Key trends	Extant gaps	Directions for the future	Rationales for those directions
Technology	<i>How will technology influence future research into BP?</i>	<i>Establish a methodology capable of measuring technological influence.</i>	<i>It will be important to develop technologies that brands can use in their interactions with consumers (e.g., virtual and augmented reality, big data, artificial intelligence, 5G technologies, metaverse).</i>
Social media	<i>How will BP be communicated and perceived on social media?</i>	<i>Analyse BP communications on social media.</i>	<i>The importance of social media has increasing substantially, especially since the Covid-19 pandemic.</i>
Ethical, environmental and social responsibility	<i>How will corporate social responsibility and corporate sustainability affect BP?</i>	<i>Analyse the influence of public and private policies related to corporate social responsibility and sustainability on BP.</i>	<i>Societies are becoming more sensitive to, and demand greater, corporate social responsibility.</i>
Growing industries	<i>How is BP perceived in the context of new or emerging industry sectors, such as esports, cryptocurrencies, etc.?</i>	<i>Study new segments, contexts and scenarios.</i>	<i>To date, BP-focused studies have paid little attention to some emerging industries.</i>
	<i>How can BP contribute to the recovery of tourism activity in destinations?</i>	<i>Analyse the management of BP as an instrument for the recovery of tourism companies.</i>	<i>The global paralysis caused by Covid-19 has particularly affected the activity in this important economic sector.</i>
Methodologies	<i>How can BP scales be adjusted to different contexts?</i> <i>How can BP’s dimensions be transferred to different cultures?</i> <i>How can BP scales be used in other areas?</i>	<i>Examine new methodologies that answer and/or complement unresolved questions. For example, new findings/approaches may arise based on neuroscience techniques (e.g., electroencephalography, functional magnetic resonance imaging) or big data.</i>	<i>Utilise new methodologies because of the predominance of quantitative methodologies based exclusively on surveys carried out, above all, in the USA and Europe.</i>

Choi et al. (2022) examined the interactive effects of brand personality and service robot type.

### 3.8. Social media

Internet and social media use, and online communications, skyrocketed during the recent pandemic. It has been estimated that during the years 2020–2021, 7.3% more people employed the internet and 13% more subscribed to social networks (Social & Hootsuite, 2021). This increase makes it foreseeable that how BP is communicated and perceived in social media in different industries will be addressed. Although these have been dealt with occasionally over the last 36 years, they are not, as yet, fully developed, nor have they shown their full potential. Therefore, some topics await introduction as new lines of BP research.

### 3.9. Ethical, environmental and social responsibility

Since the financial crisis of 2008–2009, public interest entities have been very focused on corporate social responsibility strategies and on the three sustainable dimensions, the economic, the social and the environmental. Companies are increasingly aware of stakeholder pressure and criticisms of greenwashing (Velte, 2021). The growth of society’s sensitivity to these issues will push companies towards adopting sustainability and energy efficient policies. In parallel, other crises, such as Covid-19 and the invasion of Ukraine, invite analyses of the most appropriate BP strategies to respond to the conjunct challenges they set.

### 3.10. Growing industries

In the coming years, some industries will grow more than others and face new challenges. For example, the global sports industry has grown to generate more than €450 billion per annum (Desbordes et al., 2019), expanding segments being e-sports and the possibilities opened up by the metaverse and participation in virtual events. It is foreseeable that new studies will analyse the BP of different sports teams, players, sponsors and, even, major events (Perić et al., 2017). The tourism industry will also continue to grow in prominence in the coming years.

After the global paralysis caused by Covid-19 it is possible that tourism industry-related themes will re-arise, or become much more important. How can BP contribute to the recovery of tourism activity in destinations? In addition, technology and tourism are conjoined topics in the context of the immersive experiences of tourists in augmented/virtual reality, omnichanneling, artificial intelligence, smart tourism, big data, etc. (Chang et al., 2022). How BP can contribute to improving the tourist experience in the interaction of the physical, digital and social dimensions of destinations will be investigated.

### 3.11. Methodology

The results of this study show that research into BP has been dominated by quantitative survey-based methodologies, using samples mainly from the USA. It is clear from the analysis that research methods that could have provided other approaches and findings have been very little used (e.g., neuroimaging techniques, such as electroencephalography and functional magnetic resonance imaging, galvanic skin responses and eye-tracking, big data, projective techniques, ethnographic studies). In addition, it seems that the current understanding of BP is largely conditioned by western cultural perceptions, which suggests that more cross-cultural studies are needed. Finally, while various conceptualisations and measurement scales were identified in the literature, the vast majority used in current research are still based on the pioneering study of J. L. Aaker (1997) and the Big Five personality traits; it is expected that, in the future, researchers will challenge this theoretical framework with new research paradigms.

## 4. Conclusions

This work presents the most complete bibliometric analysis of the scientific production on BP carried out to date. The analysis of the 1051 articles published between 1987 and 2022 featured in the Scopus database contributes to our understanding of the state-of-the-art of research into BP and helps to identify future research directions. This study makes, consequently, several theoretical and practical contributions to the marketing discipline in general, and to branding in particular. The findings show the evolution of the scientific production of BP, its intellectual structure, the most influential works about BP, the most popular BP topics, how BP has been conceptualised and measured, what methodologies have been used and what emerging topics may attract research in coming years.

First, as to the evolution of the research, it should be noted that the scientific production, which began in the late eighties, is still growing. Although there was significant growth in research into BP in the first decade (1997–2006), the real turning point was the period 2007–2016, when 472 articles were published (44.91% of the total). Further strong growth took place in the last six years analysed (2017–2022), during which 525 articles were published, an annual average of 87.5. The findings demonstrate that BP is a construct of great interest to the scientific community and that its theoretical corpus continues to grow. Second, more than two thousand six hundred authors from seventy-five countries engaged in BP research. About 30% of the production was undertaken by authors affiliated with US institutions, many of whom had a significant impact on the literature (e.g., Aaker, Brakus, Fournier, Schmitt). This finding highlights the need to focus on BP in other cultural contexts, such as Asia and Africa, to increase the validity of the construct and to better understand how it might operate in other environments. Third, as to dissemination channels, the articles were published in 399 journals, mainly specialised in business research, marketing, branding, consumer behaviour, retailing and tourism. Therefore, the topic is of interest to editors of a wide variety of journals, which highlights the transversal implications for brand management and the potential for further development. Fourth, the articles that made the greatest impact in terms of number of citations and had the highest influence on the subsequent development of research into BP appeared

in the period 1997–2006. The seminal articles published at the beginning of this period were followed by works that expanded BP's theoretical framework: these examined cross-cultural issues/effects, the effects of BP on consumer-brand relationships, the relationship between BP and emerging constructs (e.g., consumer-based brand equity) and the application of BP in other sectors, such as tourism destinations. Fifth, as to motor themes, it was observed that the diverse topics are organised into four clusters. The first cluster focuses on BP's theoretical conceptualisation, BP dimensions and on BP scale development. The second theme cluster relates to BP marketing communications, social media and purchase intention. The third cluster focuses on BP's relationships with other brand-related constructs (e.g., attitude, trust, love and attachment) and methodological choices (e.g., structural equation modelling). The fourth theme cluster covers the tourism sector. These research topics evolved unevenly over time. The strategic diagrams show that after the theoretical framework of BP was established in the first and second periods, the third saw a greater focus on the concept in the field of tourism and diversification towards other sectors and applications. The most recent period has been characterised by a continuous increase in tourism-related studies, particularly examining destinations, and about specific types of tourism (e.g., cultural, health) and the Internet (e.g., social networks, human-technology interactions).

Sixth, with respect to the methodologies that have been used, the analysis showed that survey-based research methodologies using samples from the USA and, to a lesser extent, from Europe and Asia, were dominant. This lack of methodological diversity limits the contributions that have been made in the study of the construct. Within the last decade other methodologies (e.g., netnography, sentiment analysis, machine learning) have been introduced into the marketing discipline that can increase the knowledge of how consumers perceive the different characteristics and dimensions of brand personality, and how they influence their behaviours. Therefore, future works may examine BP using mixed methods (e.g., focus groups, experiment design) and across multiple cultural settings. For example, by employing unconscious data collection techniques (i.e., neuronal. electrodermal activity, projective techniques), which would allow us to identify how consumers respond to the different BP dimensions. Finally, this study contributes to the literature by proposing a research agenda that identifies important issues that might be addressed in the future to support the theoretical and practical development of BP, both in terms of its application in various industries and technological contexts, and to the use of new research methodologies. In particular, technology-based consumer-brand interactions (e.g., omnichannel, AI-powered devices such as chatbots, voice assistants and robots, virtual reality, augmented reality, the metaverse) offer a new study context in which BP can undoubtedly play an important role. In parallel, the application of the construct in emerging sectors (e.g., esports, virtual events, live-stream shopping, artificial intelligence and robot companions) opens new and interesting research avenues.

## 5. Limitations and future research

Despite the value of this research, we are aware that it may have some limitations. First, the database was created from publications indexed in Scopus. Although Scopus is one of the most important global bibliographic bases, and offers a broad and multidisciplinary coverage of high-impact scientific journals (Mongeon & Paul-Hus, 2016; Muñoz-Leiva et al., 2015), it may not include all BP-related publications. Future works might broaden the research base by including publications indexed in other bibliographic databases, such as Web of Science, not indexed in Scopus.

Second, the study methodology is, largely, a bibliometric analysis. The valuable indicators, clusters and thematic maps associated with this type of analysis have been enriched with a review of the relevant construct conceptualisations and measurement scales. However, due to the broad scope of the study, it was not possible to examine other issues. Future work might use other methods to explore the main BP-related

themes in more depth. For example, a meta-analysis of the subject could make an objective, quantitative assessment of relationships commonly analysed in the literature and advance the understanding of its key concepts (see Kraus et al., 2022); a conceptual review could aid in the development of new concepts, frameworks, models, taxonomies and theories, which may include propositions or hypotheses relevant to the field of study (see Lim et al., 2022).

Finally, the narrow definition of the search query “brand personality” yielded a volume of data large enough to justify a bibliometric analysis and, at the same time, focused enough not to diverge from the scope of the present study. However, future work might use other, related terms, such as “personality factors” and “brand anthropomorphism”.

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#### CRedit authorship contribution statement

**Víctor Calderón-Fajardo:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation. **Sebastian Molinillo:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Supervision, Resources, Project administration, Methodology, Funding acquisition, Conceptualization. **Rafael Anaya-Sánchez:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Investigation. **Yuksel Ekinci:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Investigation, Conceptualization.

#### Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

#### Appendix A. Supplementary material

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2023.114062>.

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