Investigation into the Relationship between Early Exposure and Brand Loyalty: Analysis of Influence of Childhood Memories

It has also been recognised there is an even greater reduction in adults' abilities to recall memories under two years old, where the majority of individuals are unable to recall any (Josselyn & Frankland, 2012). This parallels the pre-verbal period when individuals are unable to communicate through language (Morrison & Conway, 2010). In Morrison and Conway's (2010) study, participants' earliest childhood memories were explored in response to fifty cue words. Participants were also required to provide the age of when they had each memory on a seven point Likert scale. Morrison and Conway found participants' earliest memories for each of the cue words was consistently later than the age at which they first acquired the word; this was reliably found across the age range of participants. It was noted participants' age of acquisition for more abstract words such as 'vase', was older than that for more commonly used words in childhood such as 'jelly'.

Consequently, Morrison and Conway postulated that without the formation of conceptual information relating to a specific word, individuals are unable to access episodic memories relating to that word; underlining one of the causes of infantile amnesia. Using a similar method to Morrison and Conway (2010), participants in the current study will be required to recall their earliest memories in response to product cue words, stating the age of when they had each memory. It is postulated that by allowing participants to recollect their earliest autobiographical memory of each product, recall of when they were first exposed to their preferred brand of each product will be more easily facilitated, as it has been suggested that during the process of autobiographical recall, individuals can feel as though they are re-experiencing events (Schacter, 1996).

There is evidence to support the projective method used in the current study; Josselson (2000), highlighted it has long been known that individuals' earliest childhood memories have the ability to signify their current internal opinions, providing a useful insight for researchers (Adler, 1937). It has also been recognised events that take place early in individuals' lives have more powerful effects than if they were experienced later (Hayne, 2004). Most notably, with regards to this study, previous research has found exploring individuals' earliest memories from childhood is a useful tool to understand present brand affiliations; it allows for an understanding of how brand relationships were first developed (Braun-LaTour & LaTour, 2007). Exploring childhood memories of brands also helps to understand affective attachments and reasons for current brand choices (Braun et al., 2002). Braun-LaTour et al., (2007) in an attempt to understand brand meaning, proposed that individuals' earliest product memories could be utilised as a means of understanding their current product relationships. They recognised individuals' earliest memories were able to account for later brand preferences; interestingly it has been proposed earliest childhood memories are in fact more beneficial to study than memories from adolescence when attempting to understand current brand loyalties (LaTour et al., 2010).