

CONCEPTUALISING BRAND PERSONALITY: AN OVERVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF BRAND PERSONALITY DIMENSIONS

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ABSTRACT

A brand personality is one of the most important factors in developing a strong brand identity. In the brand management literature Kapferer was (according to Aaker, 1997) one of the first to introduce it in the 1970s. It is usually defined as “the outward face of a brand, its characteristics most closely associated with human traits”. Aaker states that the perceived personality of a person is affected by nearly everything associated with that person – including his or her neighborhood, friends, activities, clothes, and manner of interacting – so to is a brand personality. Today, the dimensions of brand personality are commonly defined as “the set of human characteristics associated with a brand” (Aaker, 1997, p.347). In particular, it has been argued that, because human and brand personalities have different antecedents; some dimensions of human personality may be mirrored in brands, whereas others might not (Aaker 1997, p. 348).

Keywords: customers’ e-service, online banking, management literature etc.

INTRODUCTION:

Brand personality forms a significant component of brand identity. Therefore, we first discuss brand identity frameworks, the place of brand personality therein, and the importance of measuring brand personality by means of personality items only. Next, we present an overview of human personality, and summarize how personality appears in recent brand personality scales.

Kapferer (2008) explains brand identity as a brand’s meaning as put forward by the firm. It is the way a company desires to present its brand to its target groups. Brand image, on the other hand, is the consumers’ perception and interpretation of the brand’s identity (De Pelsmacker, Geuens, & Van den Bergh, 2007). Academics typically conceptualize brand identity and image as multi-dimensional constructs of which brand personality is an important component. Keller (2008), for example, explains brand image as consisting of (1) user profiles, (2) purchase and usage situations, (3) personality and values, and (4) history, heritage and experiences. Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000) organize brand identity elements around four perspectives: (1) the brand as a product, (2) the brand as an organization, (3) the brand as a person, and (4) the brand as a symbol.

Building on the constructivist school of theorizing about communications, Kapferer developed a brand identity prism in which he considers a brand as a speech flowing from a sender to a receiver (Kapferer, 2008). He argues that the brand identity dimensions physique (i.e., physical features and qualities) and

personality (i.e., human personality traits) picture the sender. The identity dimensions reflection (i.e., image of the target group) and self-image (i.e., how the brand makes consumers feel) depict the receiver. The dimensions culture (i.e., values) and relationship (i.e., mode of conduct) form a bridge between the sender and the receiver (Sritharan R, and Samudhrarakumar C. 2008)

Tamizh jyothi and Samudhra Rajkumar (2005) concluded in their study on the effectiveness of celebrity advertisements, wherein they have considered product categories and brands are the important factors that influence the effectiveness of celebrity advertisements.

Tamizh jyothi and Samudhra Rajkumar (2005) conducted a study on the effectiveness of celebrity advertisements, and identified that the products and brands are the key factors in the determination of the effectiveness of celebrity advertisements.

Kailasam Tamizhjyothi and Samudhra Rajakumar (2011) concluded in their study on the role of profession in the prediction of effectiveness of multiple celebrity endorsement, and found that attitude towards celebrity and attitude towards brands will be enhanced when it is endorsed by multiple celebrities. However, profession of the celebrity is a major factor in the prediction of multiple celebrity endorsement effectiveness.

Kailasam Tamizhjyothi and Samudhra Rajakumar (2011) found that attitude towards celebrity and attitude towards brands have significant influence on the purchase of multiple celebrity endorsed products or brands. Profession of the celebrity is also considered while predicting the effectiveness of multiple celebrity endorsement.

PERSONALITY IN BRAND PERSONALITY SCALES:

Aaker (1997, pp. 347) defined brand personality as “the set of human characteristics associated with a brand”. So, in contrast to psychologists, Aaker explains personality in terms of characteristics instead of traits. To construct a brand personality scale, Aaker (1997) started from Big Five items, but completed them with, amongst other, socio-demographic characteristics. Consequently, whereas Big Five researchers deliberately exclude gender and social class (McCrae & Costa, 1997), Aaker does include feminine, upper class, young, etc. Other researchers adopted Aaker’s definition. They admitted that not all of their items are real personality traits, and came up with items such as good-looking, healthy, old, new, heavy, and big (Sung & Tinkham, 2005), or cost-effective and financially stable (Venable, Rose, Bush, & Gilbert, 2005).

BRAND PERSONALITY DIMENSIONS:

Aaker (1997) obtained a five-factor structure of which three dimensions relate to Big Five dimensions. Sincerity taps into traits of Agreeableness and Conscientiousness. Excitement includes items like sociability, energy and activity, just as Extraversion does. Competence captures traits found in Conscientiousness and Extraversion. The other two dimensions, Sophistication and Ruggedness, do not relate to any of the Big Five dimensions.

BRAND PERSONALITY MEASUREMENT:

J. Aaker's work has tried to clarify the concept and to build a scale to measure it. To achieve that, she followed most of the time the psychologists’ steps in their study of human personality. She followed more particularly the studies made by researchers who contributed to unveil the existence of 5 dimensions subsuming personality (Five Factor Model). More specifically, J. Aaker (1997) and those who replicated or followed her work (Ferrandi, Fine- Falcy & Valette-Florence; Koebel & Ladwein64; Aaker, Benet-Martinez & Garolera65), are walking in the steps of the American psychologists Costa and McCrae who have adopted a lexical approach, and whose personality inventory (NEO-PI-R66,67) is renown, famous and translated in several languages (Rolland68 for French for example).

All those works in marketing are based on J. Aaker’s global definition of the concept: brand personality is “the set of human characteristics associated to a brand” (Aaker). J. Aaker explored the brand personality on the basis of 114 adjectives (or traits) across 37 brands that cover various product categories. She reached a 5 factor solution presented in table 1 presented below. Only three out of those five factors

correspond to some factors of the FFM in psychology.

Brand differentiation is now becoming an important tactic for combating competition in the hostile marketplace. A viable solution for establishing the distinctiveness of a brand is through brand personality. Attaching personalities to brands contributes to a differentiating brand identity, which can make brands more desirable to the consumer. Jennifer Aaker developed a specialized brand personality scale, the five dimensions of the scale being sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness.

In reference to the paradox of personality in marketing, we all have a personality, but we do not know how it is systematically related to our consumer behaviour (Albanese, 1989). However, some have argued that the symbolic use of brands is possible because consumers often imbue brands with human personality traits (termed animism; e.g., Gilmore 1919 as cited in Aaker, 1997)³³. Consumers readily can think about brands as if they were celebrities or famous historical figures (Rook, 1985) and as they relate to one's own self (Fournier, 1994)³⁴; this all may be due in part, to the strategies used by advertisers to imbue a brand with personality traits such as anthropomorphization (e.g., California Raisins), personification (e.g., Jolly Green Giant), and the creation of user imagery (e.g., Charlie girl). Through such techniques, the personality traits associated with a brand, such as those associated with an individual, tend to be relatively enduring and distinct. For example, the personality traits associated with Coca Cola are cool, all American, and real; these traits have been relatively enduring (Pendergrast, 1993) and differentiate Coke from its competitors (e.g., Pepsi being young, exciting, and hip; Dr Pepper being nonconforming, unique, and fun (Plummer, 1985).

MEASURING BRAND PERSONALITY:

To examine how the relationship between brand and human personality may drive preference, Aaker (1997) indicates that two types of brand personality scales can be used. The first types are ad hoc scales, which typically are composed of a set of traits ranging from 20 to 300 in number. However, though useful, these scales tend not to be theoretical in nature—often having been developed for the purposes of a specific research study. As a result, key traits may be missing from such scales. Furthermore, the traits that are selected often are chosen arbitrarily, which casts doubt upon the scales' reliability and validity. The second type of brand personality scales are those that are more theoretical in nature, but are based on human personality scales that have not been validated in the context of brands (e.g. Bellenger et al., 1976; Dolich, 1969 as cited in Aaker, 1997). Some dimensions (or factors) of human personality may be mirrored in brands whilst others might not. As a result, the validity of such brand personality scales often is questionable, leading researchers to argue that “if unequivocal results are to emerge (in the literature on the symbolic use of brands) consumer behavior researchers must develop their own definitions and design their own instruments to measure the personality variables that go into the purchase decision” (italics in original, Kassarian 1971, pp. 415 as cited in Aaker, 1997).

It was against this setting that Aaker (1997) developed a brand personality by isolating these distinct dimensions, further treating brand personality as a ‘unidimensional construct’ and demonstrating how different types of brand personalities can be distinguished. This has resulted in the perception that there are multiple ways in which the brand personality construct can influence a consumer's preference, and has provided investigators tools so that these may be better understood.

DIMENSION MEASURING BRAND PERSONALITY:

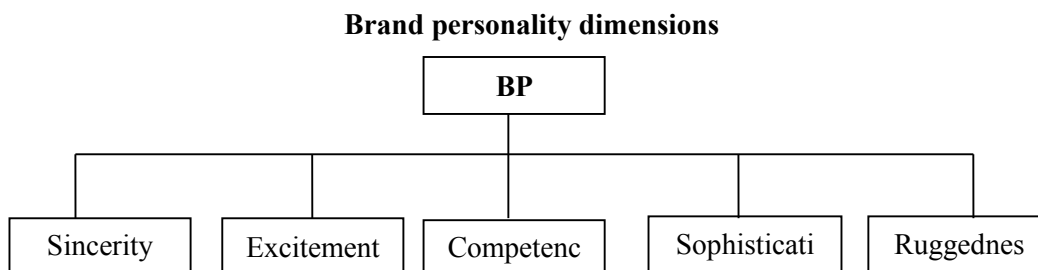
According to Melin brand personality building is based on the idea that consumer choose brands in a similar way as they close fellow human being to socialize.

Further Melin (1997) states, that strong brand loyalty is built by an attractive brand personality, connected to a story and continuous relation between brand and consumer. Mcenally and Chernatory (1999) state “as personality of brand and consumer come together, the value created is in the self expression of the consumer”.

Kim et al (2001) State “the greater the self expressive value & distinctiveness of brand personality are, the greater will be the attraction of the brand personality”. Further they explain that consumers have a tendency to identify themselves as specific groups, called the social identification. The study by Kim et

al also proved that the consumers are strongly attracted to brands which have distinct self expressive brand personality.

Aaker developed the BRAND PERSONALITY with 5 key dimensions of the personality of brand.



According to Aaker (1997) there are two types of brand personality scales, the ad hoc scales and the theoretical scales based on human personality traits. Ad hoc scales are those which are derived directly from psychology and had validation problem in the market. Hence Aaker developed a theoretical frame work on the basis of the big five human personality structure.

Aaker framework of brand personality are reliable valid and generalizable. Aaker developed this frame work with an exploratory principal component factor analysis and found that consumer perceive that the brands on five clear personality dimensions. The test was conducted on 37 brands with 114 personality traits. The reliability of these five dimensions were established though test-retest correlation & Cranach's alpha. The confirmatory factor analysis provided 42 brand personality scales which are reliable, Valid & generalizable.

The definition of brand personality items as defined by Jennifer Aaker.

Dimension Sincerity

| Brand personality item | | Definition |
|------------------------|---|--|
| Family oriented | - | The brand used by family oriented people |
| Small town | - | The brand preferred by people living in villages |
| Down to earth | - | The brand used for practical purposes |
| Sincere | - | The brand which is fair and just |
| Honest | - | The brand delivers whatever it promises. |
| Real | - | The brand promises are based on facts. |
| Original | - | The brand is a pioneer. |
| Wholesome | - | The brand provides physical and mental satisfaction. |
| Cheerful | - | The brand color and other aspects are bright. |
| Sentimental | - | The brand is used for sentimental reasons. |
| Friendly | - | The brand provides help like a friend. |

Dimension Excitement

| Brand personality item | | Definition |
|------------------------|---|--|
| Trendy | - | The brand is fashionable. |
| Daring | - | The competitors cannot match the attributes of the brand |
| Exciting | - | The brand arouses the interest of the users. |
| Cool | - | The brand gives a cool feeling. |
| Spirited | - | The brand is full of life. |
| Young | - | The brand helps users to feel young. |

| Brand personality item | | Definition |
|------------------------|---|---|
| Unique | - | There is no other brand like this brand. |
| Imaginative | - | The brand is creative. |
| UP-to-date | - | The brand is modern. |
| Independent | - | The brands activates are not based on other brands. |
| Contemporary | - | The brand incorporates current events. |

Dimension Competence

| Brand personality item | | Definition |
|------------------------|---|---|
| Reliable | - | The brads in is consistent over the years. |
| Hard working | - | The brand works very hard. |
| Secure | - | The brand is safe to use. |
| Intelligent | - | The brand quickly understands the needs of the consumers. |
| Technical | - | The brand is technically advanced. |
| Corporate | - | The brand is backed by a reputed company. |
| Successful | - | The brand is a successful brand. |
| Leader | - | The brand is the market leader. |
| Confident | - | The brand gives confidence to users. |

Dimension Competence

| Brand personality item | | Definition |
|------------------------|---|---|
| Upper class | - | The brand is preferred by upper class consumers. |
| Glamorous | - | The brand improves physical attractiveness of the user. |
| Good looking | - | The brand user is a good-looking person. |
| Charming | - | The brand is admired by friends and relatives. |
| Feminine | - | The brand is preferred by females. |
| Smooth | - | The brand usage is smooth. |

Dimension Excitement

| Brand personality item | | Definition |
|------------------------|---|---|
| Outdoorsy | - | The brand is used not only at home. |
| Masculine | - | The brand is preferred by males. |
| Western | - | The brand helps user to feel as a westernized person. |
| Tough | - | The brand can be used in tough situations. |
| Rugged | - | The brand can be used when it is irregular. |

CONCLUSION:

Aaker states that the perceived personality of a person is affected by nearly everything associated with that person – including his or her neighborhood, friends, activities, clothes, and manner of interacting – so to is a brand personality. Today, the dimensions of brand personality is commonly defined as “the set of human characteristics associated with a brand” (Aaker, 1997, p.347). In particular, it has been argued that, because human and brand personalities have different antecedents; some dimensions of human personality may be mirrored in brands, whereas others might not (Aaker 1997, p. 348).

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