

Customers' Personality and Brand Personality, and its Relations to Their Purchasing Intension

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to explore the degree to which extent the Big-Five personality factors predict the brand personality and consumers' purchasing intension of it. To achieve the objective of the study, the authors administer the Big-Five scale (Costa and McCrae, 1987) for personality and a modified brand personality scale from Aaker's (1997) for identifying brand personality. Data for this study are collected through online (web-based) survey in South Korea. The results of this study confirm statistically significant correlations between these variables.

Keywords: Brand personality, Customer personality, Corporate brand, Marketing communications, Consumer behaviour

1 Introduction

Each consumer's distinct personality may influence his or her buying behavior. Personality refers to the unique psychological characteristics that lead to relatively consistent and lasting responses to one's own environment. Personality therefore can be useful in analyzing consumer behavior for certain product or brand choices. The brand can be regarded as the lens through which the firm's marketing activities are focused. Brands are frequently imbued with personalities. The idea is that consumers are likely to choose brands whose personalities match their own. A brand personality refers to the specific mix of human traits that are attributed to a particular brand. Aaker (1997) found that a number of well-known brands tended to be strongly associated with one particular trait. For example, Levi's with "ruggedness," MTV with "excitement," and CNN with "competence." Hence these brands will attract consumers who are high on the same personality traits.

In recent years, the concept of brand personality has come to the forefront of marketing thinking, especially in the development of new brands. Harris and DeChernatony (2001) proposed that brand personality was one component of brand identity. While Nandan (2005) asserted that the other components such as brand vision, brand culture, and brand positioning contributed to the overall identity the firm sought to propagate, consumers would form their own opinions of the brand and would express this as brand image. Brand image is therefore the understanding consumers derive from the total set of brand related activities engaged by the firm (Park et al., 1986). Brand image is therefore viewed as the outcome of a dialogue between marketers and consumers.

Many marketing researchers use a concept related to personality- a person's self-concept or self-image (for example, Aaker, 1999; Azoulay and Kapferer, 2003; Belk, 1988; Govers and Schoormans, 2005; Park et al., 1986; Sirgy et al., 1991; Sirgy et al., 1997). The basic self-concept premise is that people's possessions contribute to and reflect their identities. Thus in order to understand consumer behavior, the marketer must first understand the relationship between consumer self-concept and possessions. More recently, it has been argued that brand images are increasingly used as a form of personal statements. For example,

clothing, perfume, and cars are the most frequently mentioned products that consumers use as means of self-expression (Aaker, 1996). However, a much wider variety of products have a brand or user image associated with them. Such associations of brand user with the image of the brand may affect consumer brand choice, especially when brand consumption is observed by other individuals.

Consumers say that they enjoy the challenge of purchasing a brand that matches well for their own values and personalities. It would appear that the personalities of consumers impact on the final selection of a brand and brand personality in two ways: first, the consumers are inclined to purchase a brand that reflects their own personalities; second, consumers will tend to choose a product or a company that has similar brand personalities to those of the brand being promoted. Therefore, the objectives of this study are following:

1. Is there any empirical relationship between a consumer's personality and the personality of a brand that he or she chooses?
2. Can a firm communicate its products' or brands' personality clearly enough to distinguish itself from other competitors?

2 Literature Review and Hypothesis Formation

2.1 Personality Traits

Personality refers to the unique psychological characteristics that lead to relatively consistent and lasting responses to one's own environment. Different personality theories have been developed over the years to explain the structure, process and development of human behavior. Among these personality theories, the trait theory tends to place a great emphasis on exploring the basic structure of personality. Trait theory assumes that people possess broad predispositions that cause them to behave in a particular way. There has been growing agreement among personality researchers that there are five basic dimensions of personality.

These traits, known as the Big-Five (Costa and McCrae, 1987; 1992a; 1992b), are extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience. Extraversion refers to the tendency to experience positive emotional states and feel good about oneself and the world around one. Agreeableness is the tendency to get along well with others. Conscientiousness is concerned with the extent to which a person is careful, scrupulous, and persevering. Neuroticism refers to the tendency to experience negative emotional states and view oneself and the world around one negatively. Openness to experience refers to the extent to which an individual is original, open to a wide variety of stimuli, has broad interests and is willing to take risks.

2.2 Brand Personality

While the Big-Five model of human personality is relatively universal, brand personality attributions are partly diverse. According to Aaker (1997), brand personality is defined as "the set of human characteristics associated with a brand" (p.347). Alternatively, Azoulay and Kapferer (2003) proposed a narrower definition, "brand personality is the set of human personality traits that are both applicable to and relevant for brands" (p.151). Contrary to human, brands are inanimate objects and obviously do not in themselves behave in a consistent manner. Brands are imbued by personality traits associations arising from person-related attributes, for example, traits transferred from persons associated with the brand, and product-related traits inferences, for example, stemming from product design, performance characteristics.

There were extensive attempts for exploring and measuring the meaning of brands by examining how brand personality attributes are structured (for example, Aaker, 1997, Azoulay and Kapferer, 2003; Bosnjak et al., 2007; Goldberg, 1990). Aaker (1997) inductively identified and subsequently corroborated dimensions of brand personality attributions in a series of steps. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses yielded a perceptual space for individuals comprising five dimensions (Aaker, 1997): sincerity, excite-

ment, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness. Sincerity comprises brand personality characteristics like domestic, honest, and genuine. Excitement comprises characteristics like exciting, trendy, spirited, and up-to-date. Competence comprises characteristics like reliable, responsible, and efficient. Sophistication is characterized by pretentious, glamorous and charming. Ruggedness comprises characteristics like tough, strong, and outdoorsy. However, cross-cultural research on brand personality employing Aaker's (1997) approach has shown considerable differences between cultures, with respect to the number of dimensions extracted and their meaning (Aaker et al., 2001; Austin et al., 2003; Bosnjak et al., 2007; Smit et al., 2003; Sung and Tinkham, 2005).

Ramaseshan and Tsao (2007) investigated the effects of the brand concept on the relationship between brand personality and perceived quality. They proposed a brand concept scale as of the following three concepts: functional, symbolic, and experiential. While brands can be differentiated based on the three brand concepts, products may also be differentiated (see Park et al., 1986). Symbolic concept represents that one can express oneself with the brand of product or company one uses. And the brand of products or companies that one uses will signal to others one's social status. Research on the symbolic use of brands has shown that consumers prefer those brands matching their own personality (Govers and Schoormans, 2005). Beyond utilitarian and experiential attributes, many researchers (for example, Lee and Tai, 2006; Shavitt, 1990; Siguaw et al., 1999; Sirgy et al., 1991, 1997; Wysong et al., 2002) found that brands carry significance as consumption symbols, stressing their capacity to fulfill symbolic or value expressive functions for the individual. Empirical research in the fields of consumer psychology and marketing has extensively shown that by purchasing and utilizing certain brands, consumers are inclined to maintain and enhance social approval of certain aspects of self-concept (Aaker, 1997; Belk, 1988; Govers and Schoormans, 2005; Lee and Tai, 2006; Sirgy 1985; Sirgy et al., 1997; Wysong et al., 2002).

Since Aaker (1997) developed the brand personality scale measures, Wysong et al (2002) have explored the antecedents and consequences of brand personality. Arker (1996) proposed that the company's image, logo, packaging and celebrity endorser might be antecedents to creating brand personality. As for the consequences of brand personality, Siguaw et al. (1999) proposed that a well-established brand personality could result in increased preference and usage, higher emotional ties to brand, trust and loyalty. In particular, Govers and Schoormans (2005) proposed that the consumer preferred products with a product personality that matched his/her own self-image. Since brand personality is the sole of the brand and is derived from the brand's characteristics and marketing communications, it is an important consequence of consumers' personality. In a nutshell, consumers hold favorable attitudes towards those brands matching their own personality and will most probably purchase those brands representing well their personality. It leads the authors to propose the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: The dimensions of Big-Five personality traits are related to the dimensions of brand personality.

Hypothesis 2: The brand personality can be significantly differentiated by brands or companies so as the consumers can choose their preferred brands and companies.

3 Methodology

3.1 Survey and Sample Characteristics

The authors developed the questionnaire for collecting empirical measures of the Big-Five personality traits and brand personality variables, and administered a web-based survey to online access panel members through the Internet during December 2007 in Korea. The sample consisted of 500 volunteer online access panel members participating in a web-based survey. In total, 500 respondents completed the questionnaire, and all 500 were considered as useable. Of the respondents, 59 percent (297 respondents) were male and 27 percent aged 20-29, 38 percent aged 30-39, and 22 percent aged 40-49 years old. About 70

percent of these respondents have college or university education. More than 54 percent (272 respondents) of them have employed longer than 1 year in various industries as a full-time. The others are self-employed (9 %), professionals (9 %), civil servants (5 %), students (8 %), and housewives (7 %). The average income per capita for these respondents is USD1,900 per month, which is slightly higher than the average income per capita of USD1,700 per month for Korean employees in 2007.

3.2 Measurements

In this study, established scales were utilized or modified for use to measure constructs. The authors applied the Five-factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) scale developed by Costa and McCrae (1992a; 1992b) to collect personality information about the Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, etc. This original instrument had twelve items for each dimension of personality that add up to a total of 60 items. Since a Web-based survey questionnaire of 60 items would be too lengthy as well as too time-consuming to be completed by respondents, the authors utilized only 6 items for each dimension of personality for total 30 items instead. The seven-point Likert-type scale, that is, from 1 for strongly disagreed to 7 for strongly agreed, was the format of responses. Respondents were asked to indicate how much they possessed the personality traits described by each objective item.

To operationalize the brand personality, the authors applied the five-dimension scale developed by Aaker (1997). This original instrument had total 42 items for the five dimensions of brand personality. Since a Web-based survey questionnaire of 42 items would be too lengthy as well as too time-consuming to be completed by respondents, the authors utilized only 17 items instead with modifications from Aaker's (1997) brand personality items. Thus, a modified brand personality scale consisting of 17 items has shown to respondents for their self-assessing each of the brand personality dimensions. The response format for each of these items was a seven-point scale, that is, from 1 for strongly disagreed to 7 for strongly agreed. To insure the minimization of idiomatic wording, all of the instruments were first translated into Korean, and then results were checked and translated back to English by the authors.

3.3 Reliability and Validity of Measurements

In conducting the path diagram, the authors had to review a large number of potential predictors (for example, the variables required a total of 47 items) and to calculate the simple correlation coefficients among them in order to determine which sets of independent variable combinations can best explain or predict dependent variables. One problem in such an analysis is that the simple correlation coefficients among these variables were too large to derive precisely the exact pattern or patterns of relationships.

To solve the problem of over calculations, the authors applied the principal components analysis procedure to transform the 30 items of the Big-Five scale into fewer sets of linear combinations (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was 0.857 and Chi-square=6206.616, degree of freedom=435, and significance=0.000 by the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity). The authors utilized this variable reduction scheme to the Big-Five personality measurements to obtain a modified four-component model, in which each component is a linear combination of the survey items having the highest loadings (>0.500) with these components. The four components were named as "conscientiousness," "neuroticism," "agreeableness," and "extraversion," respectively. Results from the above data analyses indicate that the sums of squared loadings from the four-component predictors have the cumulative value of 53.889% in explaining the total variance of the dependent variables.

The authors conducted a reliability analysis of the measurement scale and obtained the following results: the component of "conscientiousness" achieved the higher reliability coefficient and validity of Cronbach's Alpha=0.877 with 6 items; the component of "extraversion" attained a reliability coefficient of Alpha equal to 0.867 with 5 items; the component of "agreeableness" had the Alpha value of 0.772 with 4 items; and the component of "neuroticism" obtained the Alpha value of 0.584 with 2 items, respectively.

Again, the principal components analysis procedure was applied to transform the 17 items of the brand personality scale into new sets of linear combinations (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was 0.927 and Chi-square=5444.445, degree of freedom=136, and significance=0.000 by the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity). Applying this variable reduction scheme to the brand personality dimensions, the authors were able to derive the modified three-component model, in which each component is represented by a linear combination of the survey items having the highest loadings (>0.500) with these components. These three components were named as "achievement," "excitement," and "sincerity," respectively.

Results from the above analyses indicate that the sums of squared loadings from the modified three-component predictors have the cumulative value of 65.363% in explaining the total variance of the dependent variable. From a reliability analysis of the measurement scale, the component of "achievement" obtained the higher reliability coefficient and validity of Cronbach's Alpha=0.905 with 6 items; the component of "excitement" achieved a reliability coefficient of Alpha equal to 0.811 with 4 items; and the component of "sincerity" obtained the Alpha value of 0.769 with 4 items, respectively.

3.4 Goodness-of-Fit of Measurements and the Structural Model

After determining that the variance and covariance had satisfied the methodological assumptions and were of a form appropriate for validating causal relationships, the authors employ 500 full data samples as an input to construct a variance-covariance matrix. The Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS: Arbuckle, 1994) was then conducted for an empirical testing of the model, and the Maximum Likelihood Estimation (MLE) was applied to estimate numerical values for the components in the model. In the application of MLE, the multivariate normality was assumed in order to derive the efficient and unbiased estimates. The authors applied the degree of freedom with large standard error and negative error variances to diagnose possible identification problems according to the suggestions of Bollen and Joreskog (1985). Then, more constraints are added gradually into the model until an identification problem is remedied through the procedures recommended by Hayduk (1987).

The criteria suggested by Bollen (1989, p. 275) were utilized to assess the overall goodness-of-fit of the structural equation model. To evaluate the overall goodness-of-fit of the proposed models and to contrast the competing models, the authors consider the following measures selectively: Chi-square statistic (CMIN), degrees of freedom (DF), CMIN divided by DF (CMIN/DF), goodness of fit index (GFI), adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI), root mean square residual (RMR), normed fit index (NFI), parsimony ratio (PRATIO), and root mean square of approximation (RMSEA).

After evaluating the fitness of the overall model, the measurements of each construct are further evaluated for unidimensionality and reliability. The Fornell and Larcker (1981) guidelines, in which construct reliability and variance extracted measures should exceed 0.500 for a construct, were applied for ensuring validity. The confirmatory factor analysis used by the past marketing studies (Gerbing and Hamilton, 1996; Steenkamp and van Trijp, 1991) was employed for the measurement model to test the validation of the scales measuring specific constructs. The results of the data analysis generally achieved an appropriate fitness of the model, except the indices of GFI, AGFI, and NFI. Note that values of the GFI and AGFI can vary from 0 to 1, with values above 0.90 considered as good and values from 0.80 to 0.90 considered as moderate (Bentler and Bonett, 1980). For NFI, the closer its values to 1, the better are the fitness of the hypothesized model over the null model.

4 Results of the Data Analysis and Hypothesis Tests

"Null hypothesis 1: the constructs of the Big-Five personality scale have no significant associations with the constructs of the brand personality" was empirically tested by the survey data. The results of data analysis show that associations between the conscientiousness, neuroticism, and extraversion of the big five personality measurements and the achievement, excitement, and sincerity of the brand personality dimensions are statistically significant at the 5% confident level, see Table 1 for details. Consequently, the

Table 1 Regression output of relationships between personality traits and brand personality

Dependant variables		Independent variables	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Achievement	<-	Conscientiousness	0.532	0.068	7.872	0.000
Achievement	<-	Agreeableness	0.091	0.073	1.246	0.213
Achievement	<-	Neuroticism	0.279	0.074	3.755	0.000
Achievement	<-	Extraversion	0.657	0.090	7.327	0.000
Excitement	<-	Conscientiousness	0.597	0.054	10.966	0.000
Excitement	<-	Agreeableness	-0.082	0.050	-1.620	0.105
Excitement	<-	Neuroticism	0.257	0.053	4.841	0.000
Excitement	<-	Extraversion	0.323	0.058	5.528	0.000
Sincerity	<-	Conscientiousness	0.329	0.041	7.942	0.000
Sincerity	<-	Agreeableness	-0.107	0.036	-2.982	0.003
Sincerity	<-	Neuroticism	0.125	0.036	3.468	0.001
Sincerity	<-	Extraversion	0.248	0.044	5.605	0.000

Fitness Measures: Chi-square=2183.736, Degrees of freedom=424, Discrepancy / df =5.044, RMR=0.197, GFI=0.765, Adjusted GFI=0.725, NFI=0.756, PRATIO=0.912, RMSEA=0.090

Table 2 ANOVA output of Mean differences of the brand personality dimensions by brands

Constructs	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Achievement	10.523	2.631	3.099	0.016
Excitement	1.620	0.405	0.415	0.798
Sincerity	5.927	1.482	1.451	0.217

authors conclude that the conscientiousness, neuroticism, and extraversion of the big five dimensions can be utilized to better communicate to a selection of brand identity.

From the results of testing hypothesis-1 of the surveyed data, the authors summarize the following conclusion: the conscientiousness, neuroticism, and extraversion of the Big-Five personality dimensions have positive relationships with the achievement, excitement, and sincerity of the brand personality dimensions, respectively.

“Null hypothesis 2: the constructs of brand personality have no significant differentiation effects between brands or companies” was empirically tested by the survey data. To test the hypothesis, the authors conducted an analysis of variance (ANOVA) by brands and companies. The results of ANOVA suggest that there are significant differences in the mean values among automobile brands or companies for the achievement attribute (F-value=3.099, significance=0.016), see Table 2 for details. For the other dimensions of brand personality, the empirical data do not support that there are significant differences in the mean values among automobile brands or companies for the excitement and sincerity attributes.

The respondents show a preference for different brands and companies. For example, a larger group of the respondents positively appreciate E-firm’s brands (mean value=0.430 with the standard error of 0.189) in their perceptions of achievement attribute, whilst other groups of the respondents negatively appreciate D-firm’s brands (mean value= (-0.293) with the stand error of 0.138) and B-firm’s brands (mean value= (-0.153) with the standard error of 0.104) in their perceptions of achievement attribute, see Table 3 for details.

Contrary to the achievement attribute, the excitement and sincerity attributes of brand personality have no significant differences on the mean values between companies. The reasons may be explained by that the consumers’ perceptions towards Korean automobile manufacturers may be neutralized and moderated by the companies’ marketing communications and/or the mixture of different brands of the companies.

Table 3 Descriptive of Mean differences of the brand personality dimensions by brands

Brands	Firm-A	Firm-B	Firm-C	Firm-D	Firm-E
Achievement	0.038(0.064)	-0.153(0.104)	0.066(0.249)	-0.293(0.138)	0.430(0.189)
Excitement	0.071(0.068)	-0.027(0.113)	-0.138(0.278)	0.053(0.163)	-0.112(0.179)
Sincerity	0.089(0.068)	0.022(0.130)	0.379(0.206)	-0.216(0.168)	-0.147(0.154)

5 Managerial Implications and Discussion

Consumers say that they enjoy the challenge of purchasing a brand that matches well for their own values and personalities. The results of the hypothesis-1 test empirically show that there are certain relationships between a consumer's personality and the brand personality of the consumer's choice. That is, the consumers' personalities impact on the final selection of a brand and a company that represents well their own personalities. Therefore, the consumers are inclined to purchase a brand that reflects their own personalities and tend to choose a product or a company that has similar brand personalities to those of the brand being promoted. In particular, the results of the study attest the Govers and Schoormans' (2005) proposal that the consumer prefer products and brands with a brand personality that matches his/her own self-image. Since brand personality is the sole of the brand and is derived from the brand's characteristics and marketing communications, it is an important consequence of consumers' personality. Consequently, consumers hold favorable attitudes towards those brands matching their own personalities and will most probably purchase those brands representing well their personalities.

The results of the hypothesis-2 test empirically show that there are certain distinctions between the consumer's choices of a brand personality. For example, the results of ANOVA suggest that there are significant differences in the mean values among brands or companies for the achievement attribute. Brand personality is a component of brand image, which has been previously considered as a co-construction of the firm and its brands. In fact, because the firm usually uses marketing communications to create a brand personality, the brand identity itself is a co-construction between the firm and its marketing communications.

Corporate branding can be understood as a marketing communications practice concerned with the propagation of products and brands the firm produces. Corporate brands, like all brands, are therefore vulnerable to the attribution of meanings. Balmer (2001a) contended that corporate brand differentiation was one of the virtues of successful corporate branding. Keller (1998) also stated that differentiation was the second principle guiding the creation of brand knowledge. Aaker (1996) argued that differentiation was particularly important at the corporate brand level because a distinctive corporate brand enables consumers to select between products offerings that are otherwise similar or the same. The emphasis of Balmer (2001a), Keller (1998), and Aaker (1996) have placed on brand differentiation appears on the importance of standing out as different.

However, the results of the hypothesis-2 ANOVA test also suggest that there are no significant differences in the mean values among brands or companies for the other dimensions of brand personality, for example, excitement and sincerity attributes. Leitch and Motion (2007) argued that the interplay between normalization and differentiation was at the heart of the creation of corporate brand value. While product brands can be ephemeral, there is a close relationship between the corporate brand and the firm's identity it represents. Balmer (2001b) argued that a corporate brand should be directly derived from a firm's identity and constituted the major vehicle for communicating that identity to consumers. The tight link between what a firm is and the brand associations of its corporate brand means that there is far less room for marketing communications than there is with products and brands. Successful corporate brand strategies must position the organization within the boundaries of what is accepted, while at the same time differentiating the organization from its competitors.

While brand meanings may spontaneously arise from the types of consumers who purchase and use brands, the firm may facilitate the process of brand image creation through marketing communications.

Kuksov (2007) and Wernerfelt (1990) argued that brands as a symbolic language allowed consumers to communicate their types to each other and postulated that consumers had a certain value of communicating their types to each other. Therefore, how brand meanings are established, and specifically how a firm may communicate with consumers about the meanings of the brand are interesting topics for the future research. One of the possibilities suggested by researchers is the transfer of personality meaning from the celebrities used in marketing communications to initial consumers of the brand and from the initial users to other consumers (for example, Escalas and Bettman, 2005; McCracken, 1989).

For academics, there is still much to learn about the dialogue between marketers and consumers, and that has tended to be main focus of research in marketing communications. What has tended to be less well researched is the effect of the individual's personality on the process of selecting a brand. Brand personality does not arrive fully-formed, nor can it be calculated in the brand manager's office. Part of the dialogue and part of the development of branding must involve the personalities of those who purchase the brand. There is therefore considerable scope for examining dialogue in a broad sense, incorporating aspects of the dialogue between the firm and the consumer, and between the consumer's personality and the brand personality.

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