VALIDATING THE BRAND PERSONALITY SCALES WITH A PERSONAL CARE PRODUCT

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Abstract

Many research studies have been carried out to measure the Brand Personality and its application to various services and products. Aaker defines brand personality as "the set of human characteristics associated with a brand." The clear delineation of brand personality, however, remains somewhat vague and indistinguishable from other constructs such as brand image or brand identity. Essentially, little is known about why consumers try to infuse human traits into brands. Further, there is a dearth of research that empirically demonstrates the utility of developing a strong, positive brand personality; that is, what is the effect that brand personality will have on consumer-related outcomes. While marketing practitioners seem to readily accept the notion that brand personality is related to favorable advantages. Support for this assumption is primarily anecdotal and these relationships have not been subjected to extensive empirical testing. The objective of this research paper is to validate the brand personality scale for a personal care product using the brand personality scale developed by Aaker (1997) which consists of five major factors and 42 traits, the traits will be scaled down which are suitable for the product, with the suggestions of academicians and corporate folks.

Key Words: **Brand Personality, Brand, Reliability analysis, Personal Care, Traits**

INTRODUCTION

Many researches have been carried out to measure the Brand Personality and its application to various services and products. Brand Personality is defines by Aaker (1997, p. 347) as "the set of human characteristics associated with a brand." The clear delineation of brand personality, however, remains somewhat vague and indistinguishable from other constructs such as brand image or brand identity. Essentially, little is known about why consumers try to infuse human traits into brands. Further, there is a dearth of research that empirically demonstrates the utility of developing a strong, positive brand personality; that is, what is the effect that brand personality will have on consumer-related outcomes. While marketing practitioners seem to readily accept the notion that brand personality is related to favorable advantages, support for this assumption is primarily anecdotal and these relationships have not been subjected to extensive empirical testing.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Researcher have focused on how the personality of brand facilitates a consumer to express his/her self (Belk 1988), an ideal self (Malhotra 1988), or specific dimensions of self (Kleine, Kleine and Kernan 1993) through the use of brand. Few scales were developed to partially measure brand associations, Park and Srinivasan (1994) developed items to measure one dimension of toothpaste brand associations that included the brand's perceived ability to fight plaque, freshen breath and prevent cavities. This scale was clearly product category specific. Aaker (1997) distinguished five dimensions of brand personality, and 42 traits viewed as traits associated with the brand:

1 sincerity; 2 excitement; 3 competence; 4 sophistication; and 5 ruggedness.

So to practically put this Brand Personality Scale in use in some of the applied studies is a challenge due to its length. Also, the generalizability of the brand personality scale is limited because many brands are not personality brands, and no protocol is given to adapt the scale (Low 2000). As Aaker (1996b, p. 113) notes, "using personality as a general indicator of brand strength will be a distortion for some brands, particularly those that are positioned with respect to functional advantages and value".

Objective

This study focused on the following objectives:

a) To measure the brand personality of AXE Deodorant.

b) To explore the model validity of Jennifer Aaker's Brand Personality Scale.

Research Design

Initially a pilot survey would be conducted to do a reliability analysis, to scale down from 42 traits which shall be suitable for the personal care product taken for the research, followed by the actual survey of 120 samples.

Sampling Method

The population for this study consisted of Male MBA students from Bijapur (Karnataka State, India) and Mumbai (Maharashtra, State, India) in the age group of 22-28 years.

The sample for the study was selected from the population by stratified sampling method on the basis of usage pattern of the brand (deodorant)

The sample size selected for the study was 125.

Results and Analysis

The study indicated that about 93 per cent of the respondents used deodorant products, about 35 per cent of the respondents used only AXE brand, 22% used Zatak,19 per cent used Adidas, 10% Nike and whereas the remaining comprised the brands like Godrej, Fa Men, Rexona and others .

The study also revealed that 35 per cent of the respondents who were using only AXE brand were using the brand for more than two years suggesting that most of the respondents had an understanding about the AXE brand.

Few respondents who were using more than one brand indicated that they switched among the brands once in three months or once in more than six months.

All the traits were measured using a 7 point scale (Likert scale). The traits were adopted from the previous work of Aaker (1997). After doing a reliability analysis using spss (table 1), it is found that all the 5 dimensions are applicable to the test brand adopted in the study. The contribution of the above factors to overall brand personality is measured by confirmatory factor analysis.

Table No.1 Dimensions of Brand personality for Axe Deodorant

Source: Primary data

Dimensions	No. of Items	Cronbach's alpha	Standardized Path Coefficients	P-value
sincerity	11	0.498	0.236	0.000
excitement	11	0.712	0.513	0.000
competence	9	0.676	0.356	0.000
sophistication	6	0.512	0.439	0.000
ruggedness	5	0.875	0.612	0.000
All	42	0.762		

All the traits are not applicable falling under the five dimensions of brand personality scale, that the reason of getting low cronbach alpha score, so a overall cronbach alpha score is taken to go ahead with the study. The ruggedness is the most reliable dimension   of Axe brand followed by excitement and competence. The consumers do not perceive Axe as sincere and sophisticated. However, all these attributes contribute significantly for Axe brand. In other words all the above mentioned dimensions have contribution in making Axe, what it is.

Table No.1 Reliability Analysis

Latent Variable- Brand Personality

Dependent Latent Dimensions	Standardized Path Coefficients
Sincerety	0.236
Excitement	0.513
Competence	0.356
Sophistication	0.439
Ruggedness	0.612

Chi square Goodness of Fit, Minimum was achieved

Chi-square= 940.34, Degrees of Freedom= 813, Probability level = <0.001, RMSEA= 0.061(<0.05),

CFI = 0.98 (>0.9), NFI= 0.821(nearer to 0.90), TLI= 0.8769(Cutoff 0.9)

Table No.2 Variables defining "Sincerity "for Axe Deodorant
Latent Variable: Sincerity

Latent Variable: Sincerity	Standardized Path Coefficients	P-value
Down to earth	0.234	0.053
Family Oriented	0.123	0.064
Small town	0.165	0.075
Honesty	0.111	0.079
Sincere	0.247	0.054
Realistic	0.345	0.000
Wholesome	0.456	0.000
Original	0.691	0.000
Cheerful	0.687	0.000
Sentimental	0.534	0.000
Friendly	0.661	0.000

The perception of consumers towards Axe Deodorant as sincere is because of all the above variables except – honesty, small town, down to earth and sincerity itself. Here, the difference between variable sincere and the factor sincere is large. All the above variables to gather explain sincerity, up to 49.8%.Here, the contribution of the variables original, cheerful and friendly are maximum.

Table No.3 Variables defining factor "Excitement" for Axe Deodorant
Latent Variable: Excitement

Excitement	Standardized Path Coefficients	P-value
Daring	0.654	0.000
Trendy	0.621	0.000
Exciting	0.678	0.000
Spirited	0.652	0.000
Cool	0.772	0.000
Young	0.783	0.000
Imaginative	0.534	0.000
Unique	0.598	0.000
Up-to-date	0.421	0.000
Independent	0.543	0.000
Contemporary	0.602	0.000

The factor Excitement is strongly associated with young, cool, exciting, daring, trendy and contemporary in descending orders. The contribution of variables unique, imaginative, independent and up to date is comparatively low. All the above factors define excitement, irrespective of their size of contributions.

Table No.4 Variables defining factor "Competence" for Axe Deodorant
Latent Variable: Competence

Competence	Standardized Path Coefficients	P-value
Reliable	0.588	0.000
Hard-Working	0.356	0.071
Secure	0.415	0.000
Intelligent	0.436	0.000
Technical	0.034	0.450
Corporate	0.024	0.530
Successful	0.456	0.000
Leader	0.650	0.000
Confident	0.719	0.000

The contribution of variables-confident, leader and reliable is determining the Axe deodorant's characteristic "Competence". Also, the variables successful, intelligent and secure make significant contributions. But, Corporate, technical and hardworking do not contribute.

Table No.5 Variables defining factor "Sophistication" for Axe Deodorant
Latent Variable- Sophistication

Sophistication	Standardized Path Coefficients	P-value
Smooth	0.289	0.065
Feminine	0.212	0.068
Charming	0.647	0.000
Good looking	0.655	0.000
Glamorous	0.753	0.000
Upper Class	0.487	0.041

The dimension "Sophistication" is composed by the variables-glamorous, good looking, charming and upper class. The respondents did not believe the brand to be feminine and smooth.

Table No.6 Variables defining factor "Ruggedness" for Axe Deodorant
Latent Variable: Ruggedness

Ruggedness	Standardized Path Coefficients	P-value
Outdoorsy	0.453	0.000
Masculine	0.711	0.000
Western	0.623	0.000
Tough	0.589	0.000
Ruggedness	0.609	0.000

All the above variables in the table no 6 contribute towards "Ruggedness". The maximum contribution is by the variable masculine followed by western. Other variables include outdoorsy and tough.

Conclusion, Limitations and further Research

Only excitement and ruggedness are the two dimensions which are fully applicable to the brand chosen for the study, as other dimensions are not applicable to the brand chosen for study. The traits that are applicable for the personal care product, shall serve as the predictors for consumer willingness to buy the product. It would be easier for the marketer to emphasize the traits which are applicable to the product and correlate the characteristics the consumer look into a product, which shall help in brand image enhancement.

The study focuses on a particular personal care product, there by its difficult to state that the brand personality scale can be generalizable to all products. Further more research needs to be done with various products/services to test the applicability/validity of the brand personality scale. Data collection has to be done by filling the questionnaire by questioning only students. The results of the study cannot be generalized. To further validate more diversified samples from the populations needs to be chosen.

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