

Brand personality dimensions of Nike sportswear -an empirical analysis

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Keywords

Brand personality dimensions, Aaker's brand personality scale, Nike, Regression, correlation.

Abstract

In today's competitive marketplace several sportswear brands exist. These sportswear brands offer their products at best of prices, services and quality. In such a scenario it is becoming very difficult for consumers to differentiate between the products available in the same product category. Brand personality thus plays a vital role by enabling the consumers to evaluate the products, by making the brands more distinctive and enduring. The purpose of this paper is to identify the brand personality dimensions of Nike sportswear brand by using Aaker's brand personality scale. The second purpose of this study is to find out how the brand personality of Nike sportswear brand formed. The data were collected from 300 University of Bahrain students studying in Bahrain. In order to analyze the data, factor analysis and multiple regression techniques were applied. The results indicated that four brand personality dimensions were extracted for Nike sportswear brand named as Competence, Sincerity, Sophistication and Excitement. The factors forming the brand personality of Nike were Logo, User Imagery and Advertisement Style. The findings of this study will enable the marketing practitioners to better understand the personality of Nike sportswear brand from the minds of consumers and better distinguish Nike brand from their competitors.

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Introduction

21st century is an era of branded products particularly among the youths of the countries that purchase products not only for their physiological need but for their emotional and self-expressive benefits. In today's market scenario homogeneity prevails among the products and it is becoming very easy to replace the products with that of the competitors. Therefore, it has become vital to look for differences among the products. This point of differentiation can be attained by developing a distinctive and enduring brand personality. Brand personality is defined as the set of human characteristics associated with a brand (Aaker, 1997). A distinctive brand personality helps in creating a set of unique and favourable associations in consumers' memory (Adamantios., 2004; Johnson., 2000; Keller, 1993).

In this study the sportswear industry is taken into consideration where the top sportswear brands such as Nike, Adidas, Puma and Reebok are competitively striving to build their brands in a way to attain maximum market share. In the formation of brand personality of sportswear brands, the marketing activities such as advertising, celebrity endorsements, events sponsorship, user imagery etc. play important roles. All marketing activities and brand management decisions trigger attitudinal, cognitive, and behavioural responses on the part of the consumer and their buying decision. It has been found that many studies have been devoted to brand personality (Okazaki, 2006; Supphellen & Gronhaug, 2003; Venable & Rose, 2003) in which the main focus has been to study the effect of brand personality or the issues of measuring brand personality. However, there is very limited research on brand personality in the case of sportswear brands and on the factors, which form brand personality.

The concept of brand personality has drawn attention of academics for over a decade. Although practitioners of advertising have used the concept for at least two decades, academic research on brand personality gained momentum after the publication of Jennifer Aaker's article on the topic in 1997. Since

then, a large number of papers have been published on various aspects of brand personality. The body of work is now large enough for undertaking an analysis of the research methods that have been used. No such analysis has been published in the branding literature till date; therefore, a review of the methods used in brand personality research will be useful for researchers who are planning new studies in this field.

This paper is based on a survey and analysis of peer reviewed journal articles on brand personality which were available in full text form on online databases. The survey is exploratory in nature. We begin with an overview of brand personality research followed by an overview of methods that have been used in brand personality research. The classification scheme used for classifying research methods is discussed and the findings about research methods used are then presented.

The concept of personality is well established in the psychology literature. People are often described by adjectives which denote characteristic ways in which humans respond to their environment. Research in psychology has identified five dimensions or factors which can be used to describe human beings (Goldberg, 1990). These five uncorrelated factors identified as Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism and Openness to experience have also been termed as Big-Five factors (Paonen, 2003). It has been found that people can differ significantly on their scores on each of these five dimensions.

The concept of brand personality has been used by marketing practitioners and academics. Advertising practitioners have applied the concept of brand personality in their quest for improving the impact and effectiveness of brand related communication. Plummer (1984) suggested that one of the ways in which brands can be described is through characterization and that these characterizations can be termed as the brand's personality. The academic literature on branding contains references to the concept of brand personality and the view of the brand as a person. Kapeferer (1994) proposed a brand identity model in which personality was one of six faces of a brand identity prism. In this model, personality denotes the character of the brand and the way the brand would speak of the product or service if it were a person. Another brand identity model (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000) includes brand as a person as a specific construct of brand identity. This construct of brand as a person includes two categories- personality and customer/brand relationships. The consumer behavior literature also discusses brand personality. Allen and Olson (1995) define brand personality as the set of specific meanings which describe the brand's inner characteristics. Fournier (1995) has suggested that consumers can perceive brands as partners having specific traits, with traits being inferred based on marketing and communication activities of the brand.

Academic research in brand personality has gained momentum after Aaker's (1997) article in which she presented a scientifically developed scale for measuring brand personality. Aaker first developed a scale consisting of 42 items which loaded on to five dimensions - Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication and Ruggedness. Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale has been used either on its own or in conjunction with other scale items for research on brand personality in several countries -Spain and Japan (Aaker , 2001), Chile (Rojas-Mendes , 2004), Korea (Yongjun Sung and Tinkham, 2005), Australia (Smith , 2006), Germany (Zentes , 2008) and India (Thomas and Sekhar, 2008).

Researchers using Aaker's (1997) scale in other countries have found that the five dimensions have been validated in the United States are not replicated in other countries. Aaker (2001) discovered that in Japan it was necessary to replace the Ruggedness with a new dimension labeled Peacefulness, while in Spain it was necessary to replace the Ruggedness and Competence dimensions with new dimensions labeled Peacefulness and Passion. In a study of the Ford brand personality in Chile, Rojas-Mendes (2003) found that the Ruggedness dimension was neither reliable nor valid. Yongjun Sung and Tinkham (2005) examined respondents' perceptions of the personalities of global brands in Korea and US and found that two dimensions unique to Korea - Passive Likeableness and Ascendancy were needed to explain the brand personality structure. Other studies like Zentes (2008) and Thomas and Sekhar (2008) have found it necessary to modify the Aaker (1997) scale. Geuens, Weijters and DeWulf (2009) describe a new brand personality scale that is reliable at the level of category, brand and respondent, and is valid across several countries in Europe.

A variety of methods has been used in brand personality research. Researchers have used qualitative methods, experiments, and surveys to obtain data. Different types of samples have like convenience samples, student samples, representative samples, online panels, consumer samples and expert samples have been used. Data has been analysed using a variety of techniques ranging from simple t-tests, to correlation, regression and Factor analysis. The following sections provide details of a review of methods used in brand personality research based on a study of selected journal articles on brand personality.

The main purpose of this study is to find out brand personality dimensions of Nike sportswear and the factors forming its brand personality of Nike sportswear.

Literature review

Brand Personality

The emergence and development of brand is not a modern phenomenon, but it existed since time immemorial. Brands were used to differentiate goods of one manufacturer from the other. According to De Cheratony (1998) today's brand consists of tangible and product related attributes as well as intangible, non-product related characteristics (the added value). Thereby, it is important to note that it is especially the added value which makes the difference between a brand and a simple product and which gives a company a competitive advantage (Aaker, 1996). It can be said that a brand is more than a product which can have dimensions which differentiate it from other products (Keller, 2008). The brand personality concept assumes that brands like human beings have a personality, which can be defined as the 'set of human characteristics associated with a brand'. Plummer (1985) defines brand personality as being the perceptions of consumers about a brand. According to Batra. (1993) brand personality is the internal link of the whole brand image. Brand personality is a strategically important construct that can help firms achieve enduring differentiation and sustainable competitive advantage (Freling & Forbes, 2005; Plummer, 2000). Bahraini sports celebrities have been looked upon as role models for decades, and with the technological advances in broadcast and interactive media, it appears that famous and infamous athletes are everywhere (Jones and Schumann, 2000).

Brand Personality Dimensions

Despite the growing interest in personality concept its measurement has been insufficient for a long time until the mid90's. Many research studies were conducted on the brand personality concept and its measurement, but their brand personality research methods lacked universal validation and acceptance (Wells., (1957); Alt & Griggs, (1988); Batra., (1993). Based on human personality model 'The Big five', Aaker (1997) developed the first reliable, valid and generalizable five-dimension model in context of the brands known as brand personality scale (BPS). She selected 631 subjects to give their opinion on 37 brands with respect to the 114 personality traits. An exploratory principal component factor analysis was conducted whose results suggested that consumers perceived that brands have five distinct personality dimensions: Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication, and Ruggedness. Each dimension was divided into a set of facets, comprising of traits. Aaker's brand personality scale has been widely used by many researchers to determine the brand personality.

For example, Supphellen and Gronhaug's (2003) validated usefulness of brand personality scale developed by Aaker (1997). Five brand personality dimensions were extracted naming successful and contemporary, sincerity, excitement, sophistication and ruggedness. The findings of the study proved that brand personality adjectives may shift from one dimension to another depending on culture. Mendez. (2004) measured the Ford Brand Personality in Chile, using Aaker's Brand Personality Scale. A validity check of scale using factor analysis indicated that number of dimensions of brand personality was 13 and that 10 items of Aaker's Brand Personality Scale were not applicable under Bahraini conditions. The study suggested that the choice of personality dimension other than competence, which is more related to function, attribute could help Ford to improve its positioning. Smith. (2006) assessed the brand personality of Netball Victoria in Australia. They suggested that Aaker's brand personality framework needs to be modified. They introduced a new factor, innovation in the framework. Measurement and validity of Jennifer Aaker's brand personality scale (1997) for Colgatebrand was checked by Thomas and

Sekar (2008). The study concluded that the brand personality dimensions ruggedness, competence and excitement were the key dimensions of Colgate brand personality out of the other dimensions in Aaker's brand personality Scale. Mustamil. (2014) determined the brand personality of Nike sports shoe. Findings revealed that seven dimensions were extracted from analysis in which four new dimensions were formed. The new dimension Dignified was the most dominant dimension of brand personality of Nike sports shoes.

Bahrain has internet penetration of 93% and social media penetration of 78.86% of users consider internet as important source for news and events whereas 82% consider it as important source for entertainment.

Brand Personality Drivers

Creation of brand personality can be seen as a process where both the customer and a company create brand personality from their own perspective. The perception of brand personality traits can be formed and influenced by any direct or indirect contact that the consumer has with the brand (Plummer 1985 dimensions paper). Aaker (1996) suggested the breath of factors both related and unrelated to the product, affecting perceptions of a brand personality.

The primary drivers of brand personality are the product related characteristics such as product category, package, price and attributes. Non product- related characteristics includes user imagery, sponsorship, symbol, age, advertising style, country of origin, company image, CEO and celebrity endorsers. Therefore, the brand personality drivers both product-related and non- product related associates the personality traits with a brand either in a direct or indirect way. It can be concluded that there are many sources which can create brand personality, but it is important how the marketers understand the importance of these drivers and use them in developing the desired personalities for their brands. The culture of Bahrain is part of the historical region of Eastern Arabia. Thus, Bahrain's culture is similar to that of its Arab neighbours in the Persian Gulf region. Bahrain is known for its cosmopolitanism, Bahraini citizens are very ethnically diverse. Though the state religion is Islam, the country is tolerant towards other religions: Catholic and Orthodox churches, Hindu temples as well as a (now-defunct) Jewish synagogue are present on the island.

Research methodology

A survey type study has been designed with a set of questionnaires which were distributed among the students of University of Bahrain in Bahrain. The students were falling in the age group of 18-25 years. Total of 300 questionnaires were distributed among the students in order to investigate which of the 42 traits taken from Aaker's brand personality scale describes Nike sportswear brand the most. Also, to determine the factors which form the brand personality of Nike. The factors used to determine the brand personality dimension of Nike sportswear were the brand personality drivers proposed by Aaker (1996). In this study only the users of Nike sportswear brand were included in the sample, which came out to be 247 out of 300 respondents. The reliability of the study was tested using Cronbach's alpha. The value obtained was higher than the acceptable limit of 0.70. In order to fulfil the validity requirements, the constructs used for brand personality and brand personality drivers in this study were identified from the literature and were based on detailed analysis of conceptual and empirical literature. Also, principal component method of extraction was used which depicted that good amount of variance was explained by the extracted dimensions and factor loadings of nearly 50% of the items corresponded exactly to the items designed and proposed by the author to measure each dimension. Therefore, the conditions for face validity, content validity and construct validity were satisfied. The statistical tools naming multiple regression and principal component analysis were performed on the data for analysis.

Data analysis

Brand Personality Dimensions of Nike Sportswear

Principal component analysis with varimax rotation was applied on the 42 traits of brand personality in order to identify the brand personality dimensions for Nike sportswear brand. In this research in order to check the sampling adequacy and appropriateness of data, Kaiser- Mayer-Olkin test (KMO) and Barlett's Test of Sphericity was performed. The values of KMO Measure of Sampling

Adequacy (0.887) and Barlett's Test of Sphericity (1412.249, Sig=0.000) were above the acceptable limit. It indicated that the data was appropriate for Principal Component Analysis.

The items with the factor loading of 0.40 and greater were considered in the rotated component matrix as suggested by Hair. (1998). Also, the items which exhibited low factor loadings (<0.40), high cross loadings, low communalities (<0.50) were candidates for elimination (Hair., 1998). After considering the above criterions, 25 items were deleted. A final 4-factor solution was obtained accounting for 58.835% of total variance, with all the communalities above 0.50. Table 1 depicts the 17-item factor structure along with their respective factor loadings, Eigen value, percentage variance, communalities, cronbach's alpha, mean and standard deviation.

Table1: Factor Analysis with varimax rotation (N=247)

N0	Scales	Mean	SD	Factor Loadings				Communality	Cronbach's Alpha
				Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4		
	Competence								
	Up to date	3.69	1.14	0.631				0.56	0.82
1	Reliable	3.76	1.15	0.78				0.65	
2	Hardworking	3.68	1.15	0.678				0.57	
3	Secure	3.72	1.26	0.748				0.56	
4	Intelligent	3.72	1.27	0.689				0.56	
5	Sincerity								
6	Honest	3.62	1.33		0.75			0.64	0.81
7	Sincere	3.53	1.21		0.741			0.62	
8	Realistic	3.66	1.16		0.686			0.56	
9	Wholesome	3.62	1.23		0.685			0.53	
10	Friendly	3.64	.23		0.469			0.54	
11	Sophistication								
12	Successful	3.73	1.24			0.65		0.51	0.74
13	Charming	3.73	1.15			0.723		0.61	
14	Good looking	3.75	1.19			0.742		0.62	
15	Glamorous	3.67	1.15			0.751		0.62	
16.	Excitement								
17	Trendy	3.73	1.15				0.776	0.65	0.67
18	Spirited	3.74	1.14				0.743	0.66	
19	Imaginative	3.73	1.12				0.65	0.57	
	Eigen Value			6.03	1.65	1.23	1.11		
	Explained variance by Factor (%)			35.539	9.82	7.16	6.43		

After the extraction of four factors from the analysis, naming of factors was done. These factors acted as the dimensions of brand personality for Nike sportswear brand. According to Hair. (1998) the items with higher loadings were considered to be more important and to have greater influence on factor naming. Also, naming was done by comparing the nature of the items with those in Aaker's (1997) study. The four extracted dimensions were named as Competence, Sincerity, Sophistication and Excitement. All

the four brand personality dimensions with their traits correlated somewhat in the right way in accordance with the original Aaker's brand personality scale used in the study. Except for the few traits which got eliminated during the analysis and the others which were assigned by factor analysis to the other dimensions. The dimension Competence in the original Aaker's (1997) study comprised of 9 traits whereas the newly formed Competence dimension in this research comprised of 4 traits (Reliable, Hardworking, Secure, Intelligent) from the original scale and one trait (up to date) from another dimension. In case of second extracted dimension- Sincerity, out of 11 traits from the original Sincerity dimension, only 5 traits (Honest, Sincere, Realistic, Wholesome, Friendly) constituted the newly formed Sincerity dimension. The third extracted dimension Sophistication consisted of 3 traits (Charming, Good looking, Glamorous) from the original

Sophistication dimension and one trait (Successful) from the original dimension Competence. The last extracted dimension Excitement, comprised of only 3 traits (Trendy, Spirited, Imaginative) out of the total 11 traits in this study.

The reliability coefficients for the newly extracted dimensions were found to be above the acceptable limit (Table1). According to George and Mallery (2007), an alpha value for a set of data that is greater than 0.7 is reliable and acceptable. Also, in case of exploratory studies the Cronbach's value is acceptable at the value of .60 (Hair., 1998). It can be concluded that the brand personality dimensions extracted in this research are suitable to determine the brand personality of Nike sportswear.

Brand Personality Drivers of Nike Sportswear Brand

Multiple regression technique was used to identify the significant drivers of Nike brand personality. The non- product related drivers of brand personality naming Sponsorship, Logo, User Imagery, Advertisement Style, Company Image and Celebrity Endorsers acted as independent variables and the brand personality of Nike sportswear brand acted as dependent variables in the analysis. It is hypothesised that there is no significant relationship between the non- product related brand personality drivers and the overall brand personality of Nike. Table 2 depicts that the brand personality drivers – Sponsorship, Logo, User Imagery, Advertisement Style, Company Image and Celebrity endorsers explained 52.6% of variation in the brand personality of Nike sportswear brand. As shown in table 2, the standardized beta coefficient value for the brand personality drivers was found to be significant for the three drivers naming Logo (0.359, $p=.000$), User Imagery (0.302, $p= 0.000$) and Advertisement Style (0.091, $p=.047$). The value of standardised beta coefficient was maximum for Logo followed by User imagery and Advertisement style. It means that Logo was the most influencing brand personality driver in case of Nike. Therefore, these drivers had significant contribution in determining the brand personality of Nike sportswear brand. The remaining drivers showed non- significant contribution in forming the brand personality of Nike. Thus, the hypothesis that there is no significant influence of the brand personality drivers in forming the brand personality of Nike with respect to Logo, User Imagery and Advertisement Style is rejected.

Table2: Determinants of brand personality in case of Nike

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.362	.164		8.856	.000
Sponsorship	.062	.032	.104	1.966	.053
Logo	.223	.035	.368	6.647	.000
User Imagery	.199	.042	.302	5.874	.000

Advertisement Style	.058	.029	.094	1.981	.047
Company Image	.045	.036	.072	1.284	.203
Celebrity Endorsers	.055	.037	.096	1.693	.094
R ²	.526				
Adjusted R ²	.516				

Conclusion

The results of this research proved the acceptability and applicability of dimensions of brand personality framework suggested by Aaker (1997) in case of Nike sportswear brand. The original framework suggested by Aaker (1997) was with five dimensions namely Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication and Ruggedness. However, four brand personality dimensions were formed in this research for Nike sportswear brand naming Competence, Sincerity, Sophistication and Excitement. These newly formed dimensions comprised of only some of the traits of the original dimensions from Aaker's scale. Also, it was found that the brand personality traits locate under different newly formed dimensions than in Aaker's study (1997). Therefore, it can be concluded that the 5-factor solution of brand personality by Aaker (1997) cannot be fully replicated. Instead the 5-dimensional BPS needs adaptation when applied to sportswear brands. The influence of culture and product category may be one of the explanations for the emergence of dimensions that differ from those in Aaker's (1997) study (McCracken, 1986). This finding further reinforces a research done by Aaker and Schmitt (1997) that suggests that the symbolic use of brands appear to differ considerably across cultures.

After determining the brand personality of a brand, it becomes imperative to know how the brand personality is formed or what are the factors that influence it. In the present study the non-product related brand personality drivers proposed by Aaker (1996) were considered for determining the relationship between the brand personality of Nike and the brand personality drivers. The results indicated that the overall brand personality of Nike sportswear brand was found to be influenced by the brand personality drivers naming Logo, User Imagery and Advertisement Style.

In today's competitive market scenario, creating and managing a brand is becoming tough. Therefore, effective positioning and differentiation of a brand is essential. For this it is important to launch a distinctive and attractive brand personality in the market. The findings of this study suggest that marketers and brand managers should concern themselves with the personality of Nike brand in order to differentiate it in the competitive marketplace as well as to make the brand enduring and sustainable. Further, by exploring the forerunners of brand personality, the brand personality can be created and positioned in a much distinctive and effective manner. The role of brand personality drivers become more vital in cases when the brand personality of a brand becomes stagnate or changes for the worse as a result of which the consumers brand preference, brand loyalty and brand equity decreases. Therefore, by knowing the specific drivers responsible for forming the brand personality of a brand the problem can be resolved. The findings of this research recommend that Logo, User Imagery and Advertisement Style play a significant role in influencing the brand personality of Nike brand. Among these three-brand personality drivers, Logo was the most dominating factor on which the marketers must emphasise followed by User Imagery. The findings of this research could serve as a starting point for industry practitioners to understand more about brand personality of sportswear brands and its antecedents. The construct of this research could act as a reference in designing and repositioning Nike sportswear, which would ultimately fit the desired personality of its targeted consumers'.

Limitation and suggestions

The first limitation of this research is the meaning of traits among the consumers from whom the sample is taken. In the present study it was found that the meaning of individual traits for Nike brand was interpreted differently by the respondents. This suggests that greater care must be taken in future to clearly define the meaning of traits to respondents. Secondly, in this research Nike sportswear brand was taken as a general concept regardless of its designs, functions or subcategories like shoes, clothing, equipments and accessories. Consumers' as per their preference for certain design, functions or categories may have different perception for a brand. Therefore, future studies can study the brand in more depth by taking into consideration its various categories. Also, all the users of Nike sportswear brand were taken in the study and the perception of non-users were ignored. It will be interesting to figure out the difference in perception of users and non-users with respect to the brand personality of Nike sportswear brand. A preliminary investigation into the applicability and relevance of personality traits in the context of sportswear has been taken up in this study. An established scale, the BPS was borrowed which was originally developed to measure brand personality in consumer good settings. As a result, the personality traits may not fully represent the gamut of personality traits associated with sportswear. Future research could use qualitative research design, such as focus groups or projective techniques, to elicit destination-specific personality characteristics. The antecedents of brand personality were restricted to the non-product related brand personality drivers. Hence, other factors responsible for forming the brand personality should be included in future studies. This can be done in a better way by asking the respondents quantitatively about the factors.

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