Determining Brand Personality of Nike Sports Shoes Using Aaker's Brand Personality Scale

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Abstract

This study was conducted to identify brand personality associated with Nike sports shoes among university students based on Aaker's Framework of Dimension of Brand Personality. A total of 120 questionnaires were gathered from Management students of a Malaysian public university using Stratified Random Sampling method and analyzed using SPSS software. Findings showed that users of Nike sports shoes were highly associated with the personality: Imaginative, Cheerful, Down to Earth, Real, Charming, Trendy, Good-looking and Friendly. In addition, the most dominant dimension of brand personality of Nike sports shoes was the dimension of Dignified. Several implications were drawn based on the findings to enhance Nike's markets in evaluating their product branding strategy. Consequently, this research contributes to theoretical knowledge and its application in the field of brand personality.

1.Introduction

In order to build strong brand equity in the current market circumstances, it is essential to understand the core dimensions of brand image, which is brand personality (Lee & Oh, 2006). Brand personality is defined as 'the set of human characteristics associated with a brand' (Aaker, 1997). Brand personality is an attractive and appealing concept in today's marketing world. It is one of the core dimensions of brand identity (Aaker, 1997) and perhaps the one closest to the consumers. Just as consumers have personalities, so do brands; a brand has a name, character, self-image and a reputation. A distinctive brand personality can help create a set of unique and favorable associations in consumers' memory and this build and enhance brand equity (Adamantios et al. 2004; Johnson et al. 2000; Keller, 1993).

Brand personality is considered to be an important factor for the success of a brand in terms of preference and choice (Adamantios et al. 2004; Batra et al. 1993). The identity and values of a brand are the starting point for planning the brand elements, the marketing instruments and secondary associations. The personality of the consumer is reflected in the brand the consumer associates with. As such, marketing practitioners have become increasingly aware of the importance in building 'a clear and distinctive brand personality' (Adamantios et al. 2004).

Taking into consideration the sports shoes industry, brands such as Nike, Adidas, Fila and Puma are trying to build their brands in order to gain the greatest market share based on its targeted customers. Design and quality become the key elements for each brand to be more outstanding than their rivals but however, design of shoes is subjective; a same design might be interpreted differently by different groups of consumers. Brand personality is a vehicle of consumer self-expression and can be instrumental in helping a consumer to express different aspects of him or herself (Escalas & Bettman, 2005; Aaker, 1997). Researches had been carried out to determine brand personality of various products but research on brand personality of sports shoes remains limited. Hence it is important to find out what are the brand personalities and brand personality dimension associated with sport shoes and whether there is a difference between users' and non-users' perception on sports shoes in terms of brand personality. Hence, the focus of this study is to determine the brand personality that is associated with Nike sports shoes using Aaker's Model. In addition, the significant difference between users' and non-users' perceptions was also investigated.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Brand Personality

Today's brands generate a large portion of a company's shareholder value. This is why people are now focusing on brand development and equity. According to Business Hotline Limited in their publication of 'Creating a Brand' (2005), brands can be defined in two ways where firstly a brand can be an identification or a mark that differentiates one business from another (for example through a name or a logo). Secondly, a brand symbolizes how people help customers in their decision-making and creating a perceived knowledge of what they are going to buy, before they actually buy something. Brands are only useful where there exists ambiguity and risks, helping the consumer to make a choice (Kapferer, 2000).

A brand may consist of a 'personality' where the consumers will be able to identify and associate with their own perceptions and personalities. Aaker (1997) defines brand personality as a set of human characteristics or personalities that associated with a brand. Additionally, Plummer (1985) defines brand personality as being the perceptions of consumers about a brand. Batra et al. (1993) opine that the brand personality is the internal link of the whole brand image. It includes all of the relationships among the brand specialty, identity, and the lifestyle and characteristics of a consumer. Brand personality is a strategically important construct that can help firms achieve enduring differentiation and sustainable competitive advantage (Freling & Forbes, 2005; Plummer, 2000).

2.2 Aaker's Personality Scale

The Dimensions of Brand Personality were first constructed by Aaker (1997) to provide major consumers' personalities that are associated with brand preference. Aaker (1997) had identified a 42-item scale of traits to describe and measure the "personality" of a brand in five core dimensions and each of them is divided into a set of facets. A conceptual framework for this study is given below in Figure 1.

Aaker's Personality Scale is widely used in many previous studies to determine brand personality. For example, Lee and Oh (2006) in their study has adapted Aaker's personality scale to measure a brand personality of consumers of a traditional casual brand in Korea, BeamPole and conducted a comparison between users and non-users of the brand.

In other study by Ang et al. (2007), Aaker's Scale was used to determine the transfer effects of brand personality by endorsement of celebrities of a watch product. By using a 2x2 experimental design with 2 control groups,

findings showed that the brand personality of a watch can be changed when different celebrities were endorsed. Their findings confirmed that the image-fit between the celebrity and product is established. Shoki et al. (2012) in their research of determining a link between brand personality and laptop brand preferences, confirm the different personalities established between users and non-users of the brand. It was found that the dimension of Sincerity was more associated with laptop brand and a positive correlation exists between brand personality and brand quality rating. Similarly, the Aaker Personality Scale was used in a study by Sorayaei and Hasanzadeh (2012) on brand personality of Nestle products users. It was found that high quality of products and trust are positively linked to brand personality of a product and the brand personality associated with Nestle is Competent.
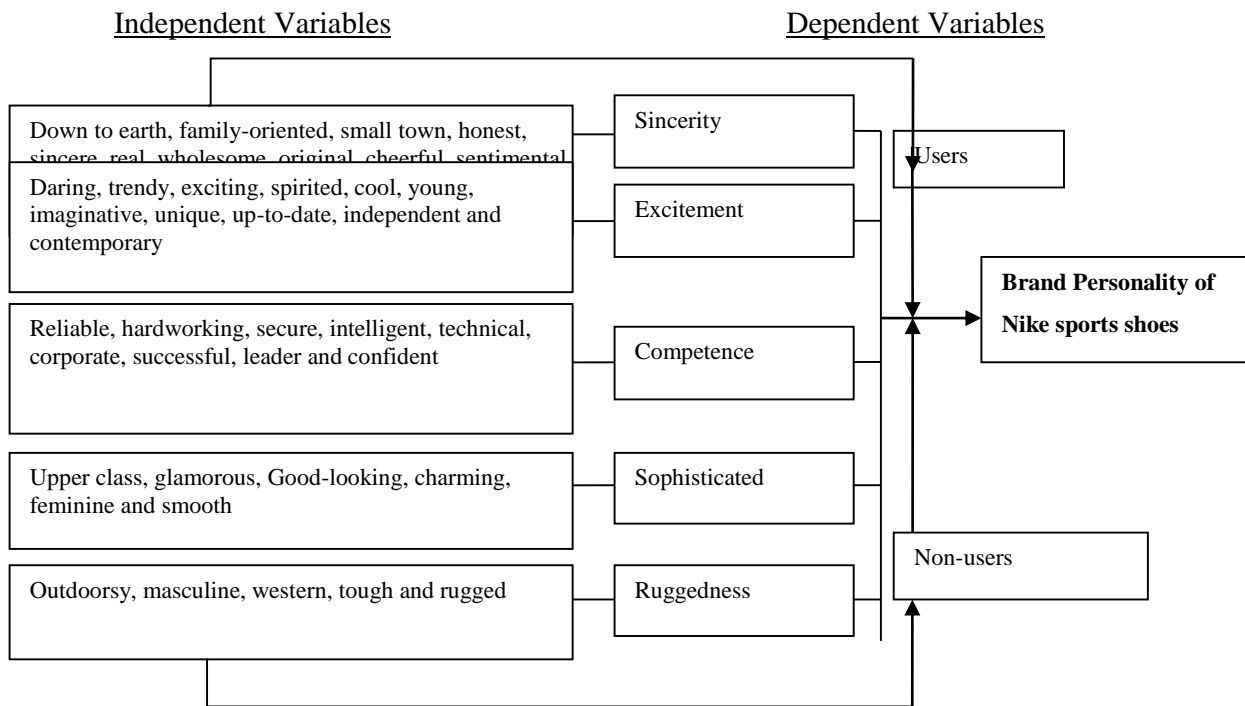
Independent Variables   Dependent Variables

Independent Variables	Dimension	
Down to earth, family-oriented, small town, honest, sincere, real, wholesome, original, cheerful, sentimental	Sincerity	
Daring, trendy, exciting, spirited, cool, young, imaginative, unique, up-to-date, independent and contemporary	Excitement	Users
Reliable, hardworking, secure, intelligent, technical, corporate, successful, leader and confident	Competence	**Brand Personality of Nike sports shoes**
Upper class, glamorous, Good-looking, charming, feminine and smooth	Sophisticated	
Outdoorsy, masculine, western, tough and rugged	Ruggedness	Non-users

Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the study

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In this current study, Aaker's Personality Scale (1997) is utilize to examine the brand personality that is associated with Nike sports shoes and the different brand personality perceived by users and non-users.

3.Research Methodology

In order to carry out the survey, a set of questionnaire was designed and distributed among Management students in a Malaysian public university using Stratified Random Sampling method. Overall, 120 questionnaires were used to investigate the 42 traits that link to Nike sports shoes and what is the most dominant dimension of brand personality. In the constructed questionnaire, respondents were asked to indicate which of the personality traits, as proposed by Aaker (1997), describe their brand personality across the five dimensions. In addition, the respondents were asked to fill in their demographic details.

The reliability of the study is tested using Cronbach's alpha. In order to comply with the validity requirements defined, a part from a comprehensive literature review, factor analysis, multiple regression and t-test were used in the study to find out the brand personality that is associated with Nike sports shoes. These methods are well validated in past researches.

4.Data Analysis

Factor analysis with Varimax rotation was performed on the 42 personality items to identify the factor or brand personalities that are associated with Nike sports shoes. Items were removed if the factor loadings were less than 0.40 (Hair et al., 1998).

In this research, the Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (0.887) and Barlett's test of Sphericity (p<0.001) indicated that the data were adequate for factor analysis. The value of the KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy for this set of independent variables is 0.887, which would be labeled as 'Meritorious'. Bartlett's test of Sphericity is 4993.223, Sig = 0.000 indicated that the data was appropriate for factor analysis. In conclusion, the results of Factor Analysis indicated that the instrument is valid and therefore further analysis could be carried out.

A total of 42 personalities were loaded into seven dimensions with 4 new dimensions were formed from the results of Factor Analysis upon data collected in this research. The dimension of Sincerity consists of 11 personalities whereby the newly formed dimension of Sincerity in this research consists of 8 personalities. The 8 personalities are Sincere, Honest, Wholesome, Real, Down-to-earth, Cheerful, Friendly and Original. The dimensions of Excitement for both original and newly formed dimension consist of same number of personalities. All the personalities that fall under Excitement dimension appeared to be the same as in the newly formed dimension in this research.

Table 1: Personalities adjusted for each dimension in this research

Dimension	Number of Personalities	Personalities
Ruggedness/ Sophisticated	11	Tough, Outdoorsy, Rugged, Leader, Feminine, Confident, Glamorous, Smooth, Masculine, Charming, Successful
Excitement	11	Exciting, Up-to-date, Unique, Young, Cool, Imaginative, Trendy, Daring, Independent, Contemporary, Spirited
Sincerity	8	Sincere, Honest, Wholesome, Real, Down-to-earth, Cheerful, Friendly, Original
Competence	5	Hard-working, Intelligent, Technical, Reliable, Secure
Dignified	3	Sentimental, Upper class, Good-looking
Family Oriented	2	Family oriented, Western
Local	2	Small town, Corporate

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The dimension of Competence remained in the newly formed dimension of brand personality in this research but the total personalities engulfed were reduced from 9 (original) to 5 (newly formed). They are Hard-working, Intelligent, Secure, Reliable and Technical. Corporate, Successful, Leader and Confident personalities which appeared in the dimension constructed by Aaker (1997), were excluded from the dimension.

Dimension of Ruggedness and Sophisticated were combined into one dimension, named Ruggedness/Sophisticated. The dimension consists of the personalities such as Tough, Outdoorsy, Rugged, Leader, Feminine, Confident, Glamorous, Smooth, Masculine, Charming and Successful. The personalities of Western and Upper class which appeared in the original dimension were excluded from the dimension. The dimension of Dignified was the new dimension formed in this research. The Dignified dimension consists of three personalities: Sentimental, Upper class and Good-looking. The dimension of Family Oriented was the third newly formed dimension which consists of two personalities: family oriented and western. The dimension of Local was another newly exploited dimension which consists of two personalities which are Small town and Corporate.

Reliability coefficients for the newly formed dimensions were analyzed and the overall Cronbach's alpha of the research was 0.786. It could be concluded that the data gathered from this research was reliable with alpha value =0.786. According to George and Mallery (2007), an alpha value for a set of data that is greater than 0.7 is reliable and acceptable. This means that the personalities used in this research were suitable to be used to determine the brand personalities associated with Nike sports shoes.

4.1 Determining the Brand Personalities Associated with Nike sports shoes

The mean scores and standard deviation scores for the total 38 personalities were tested for further analysis after factor analysis was carried out. The mean scores and standard deviation results were derived based on the general overall ranking by the respondents regardless of users or non-users of the sports shoes. The findings indicated that respondents had associated Imaginative and Cheerful with Nike sports shoes with the highest mean score in the analysis which were 3.12 and 2.98 respectively. Generally all the personalities tested fell into the category of High degree of association except Honest with the lowest mean score value of 2.48 which fell into the category of low association.

4.2 Determining the Brand Personality Associated with Nike sports shoes among users

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis of Brand Personalities Associated with Nike sports shoes among users

Brand Personalities	Mean	Std. Deviation	Degree of Association with Nike sport shoes
Imaginative	3.12	2.88	High/Descriptive
Cheerful	2.98	0.80	High/Descriptive
Down to earth	2.94	0.79	High/Descriptive

Real	2.94	0.79	High/Descriptive
Charming	2.94	0.82	High/Descriptive
Trendy	2.92	1.10	High/Descriptive
Good-looking	2.92	0.85	High/Descriptive
Friendly	2.88	1.00	High/Descriptive

Nike sports shoes users tend to associate Imaginative, Cheerful, Down to Earth, Real, Charming, Trendy, Good-looking and Friendly with Nike sports shoes. The result indicated that the nine personalities were highly associated or highly descriptive with Nike sport shoes rated by users. Although Imaginative had the highest mean score (3.12), the standard deviation showed 2.88 which indicated that the perceptions of this item among respondents were spread widely between Extremely Disagree and Extremely Agree. The standard deviations for the rest of the items were in the range of 0.79 to 1.00 indicated that the perception of users in this category were in the same range.

4.3 Determining the Brand Personality Associated with Nike Sports Shoes among non-users

Table 3: Descriptive Analysis of Brand Personalities Associated with Nike sports shoes among non-users

Brand Personalities	Mean	Std. Deviation	Degree of Association with Nike sports shoes
Cool	2.68	0.84	High/Descriptive
Wholesome	2.65	0.57	High/Descriptive
Charming	2.65	0.77	High/Descriptive
Tough	2.65	0.77	High/Descriptive
Friendly	2.63	0.73	High/Descriptive
Real	2.62	0.79	High/Descriptive
Daring	2.62	0.77	High/Descriptive
Hard Working	2.62	0.73	High/Descriptive
Trendy	2.60	0.93	High/Descriptive

Table 3 shows the list of personalities that were rated accordingly by Nike sports shoes non-users. From the results shown in the table, Nike sports shoes non-users tend to associate Cool, Wholesome, Charming, Tough, Friendly, Real, Daring, Hard-working and Trendy with Nike sports shoes. In terms of degree of association, the entire nine top mean scores on personalities fell into the category of High level of association or highly descriptive.

In conclusion, the personalities that both users and non-users associated with Nike sports shoes differed from each other based on the mean score and standard deviation analyses.

4.4 The Most Dominant Dimension of Brand Personality of Nike sports shoes

Stepwise multiple regressions was conducted to identify the most dominant dimension of brand personality of Nike sports shoes in terms of Ruggedness/Sophisticated, Competence, Sincerity, Dignified and Excitement. This research used 0.05 as the significance level. The independent variable for the equation will be Ruggedness, Competence, Sincerity, Sophisticated and Excitement, while the dependent variable will be the Nike sports shoes.

Table 4: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of The Estimate
1	0.528a	0.279	0.272	0.686

Table 4 shows that the R Square for this regression model is 0.279. This result is statistically significant. The R square value showed that 27.9 percent of the variations in determination of dimension of brand personalities for Nike sports shoes were influenced by dimensions of Dignified. Besides that, the R value was 0.528. This showed that 52.8 percent of Nike sports shoes' dimension of brand personality could be determined by all independent variables. The results indicated that the dimension of brand personality of Nike sports shoes was influenced by Dignified, Sincerity, Ruggedness/Sophisticated, Excitement and Competence.

Table 5: Regression Analysis

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	0.883	0.230		5.578	0.000
	Dignified	0.546	0.083	0.528	6.550	0.000

Table 5 shows that there was only one dominant dimension of brand personalities in explaining the Dimension of Brand Personality of Nike sports shoes. The dimension of Dignified obtained a partial correlation value of 0.546, Dimension of Dignified (t=6.550; Sig. =0.000) had a linear relationship with the Dimension of Brand Personality of Nike sports shoes. Thus, it could be concluded that the most dominant dimension of brand personality for Nike sports shoes was Dignified.

4.5 The Significant Difference in the Dimensions of Brand Personality of Nike sports shoes among users and non-users

Independent t-Test was conducted to compare the means between users and non-users with the five dimensions identified from this research. Table 4.13 shows the mean scores between users and non-users did not have any significant differences on dimension of Ruggedness/Sophisticated (t=1.074; Sig. =0.347), Excitement (t=1.274; Sig. =0.363), Sincerity (t=1.818; Sig. =0.168) and Competence (t=1.047; Sig. =0.314). However, the dimension of Dignified showed the t value as 2.018 and Significance value as 0.018 which was smaller than the Significance value used in this study 0.05, hence the result showed that the dimension of Dignified did differ for users and non-users.

5.Conclusion And Recommendation

The overall findings from the analysis concluded that Imaginative, Cheerful, Down to Earth, Real, Charming, Trendy, Good-looking and Friendly are the brand personalities of the users who are associated with Nike sports

shoes. In addition, Dignified was found to be the most dominant brand personality of Nike sports shoes. This dimension was a newly formed dimension which consists of Sentimental, Good-looking and Upper class. Independent t-Test was carried out to find out the significant different perception in terms of dimension of brand personality associated with Nike sports shoes among users and non-users. Results showed that the only dimension of brand personality which differs significantly between users and non-users were Dimension of Dignified. The rest of four dimensions of brand personality showed the significance value greater than 0.05. Hence, it can be concluded that the perceptions of brand personality among users and non-users do not differ for Dimensions of Ruggedness/Sophisticated, Competence, Excitement and Sincerity.

5.1 Implications of the Findings

The result of this research again proved the acceptability and applicability of Dimension of Brand Personality Framework suggested by Aaker (1997). The framework is proven applicable in determining the brand personality of sports shoes. The original framework suggested by Aaker (1997) was with five dimensions which are Sincerity, Sophistication, Excitement, Ruggedness and Competent. However, a new dimension was formed in this research which was the most dominant dimension to Nike sports shoes - Dignified. The findings of the research contributed to the knowledge in the field of brand personality where Dimension of brand personality of a product would change from product to product and it may vary from the original construct. The five dimensions of brand personality suggested by Aaker (1997) might not be applicable to all products and new dimensions could be formed for different products.

A strong, favorable Brand Personality provides emotional fulfillment and may lead to image enhancement, an increased willingness to continue using a given brand, trying a new brand or brand extension and to pay premium prices for a brand (Fabio & Philip, 2006). The findings of the research showed that different groups of consumers perceived differently towards a same product which could be examined via brand personality associated with Nike sports shoes between users and non-users. The brand personality associated with Nike sports shoes among users and non-users was tested and found to be significantly different. Hence brand personality of a same product might be interpreted differently by different groups of consumers. The findings of this research could serve as a starting point for industry practitioners to understand more about brand personality of sports shoes as there is no study being carried out to study between brand personality and sports shoes in the past. The construct of this research could act as a reference in designing sports shoes which would ultimately fit the desired personality of its targeted consumers.

It is recommended that the Marketing team of Nike should focus on the Dimension of Dignified in order to generate a brand that could be accepted by its consumers among Malaysian users. It is shown in the findings that in terms of the perceptions differ between users and non-users on the dimension of Dignified. It is recommended that Nike's marketers to find out what are the differences in these perceptions between users and non-users in the dimension of Dignified. Hence a detail research could be carried out to study the differences in perceptions between users and non-users based on the personality of Sentimental, Good-looking and Upper class.

5.2 Limitation of the Research

The first limitation associated with this study is the meaning of traits among the consumers from the sample taken. A consumer's preference is influenced for different reasons. One consumer may take the meaning of trendy in a different way in comparison to another consumer who may approach the meaning from a totally different aspect. It could be suggested that the different traits which developed consumers' personalities may

be ideal and realistic compared to the perceived aspiration association with Nike's brand. This could possibly mean that brand personality operates in a different way.

In terms of Nike sports shoes, it is seen as a general concept which covers the whole and full set of sports shoes series designed by Nike. In fact, different designed sports shoes were used to target on different groups of customers. This research considered all users of the Nike sports shoes regardless of its functions or design, and respondents may associate the personalities to the sports shoes that they are using or prefer. This varies across the respondents as their preferences towards the design of sports shoes are different whereas in the research, the term Nike sports shoes refers to a general concept.

5.3 Recommendations

Future studies could be carried out based on customers' segmentation of Nike. Future research could be streamed down to study on the different perceptions based on gender. This is because Nike itself designs the sports shoes based on female and male's perceptions.

Nike endorses celebrity such as David Beckham to enhance their brand personality of their products. Research could be carried out to study the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement. The study should be focus on the Dimension of Dignified in depth and analysis should be carried out on the personalities under the dimension Sentimental, Upper class and Good-looking. Longitudinal study is needed; pre-endorsement research and post endorsement research to find out the differences and the effectiveness.

Larger sample size could lead to a more accurate result (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). It is also suggested that future research to be carried out on Nike customers and the location shall be at Nike's branch outlet nationwide to ensure samples are actual regular Nike customers.

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