

## The Myth of Brand Personality: A New Tool to Measure Brand Associations for Sport Teams

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Marketing scholars have been struggling with measuring the concept of brand personality. Aaker (1997) developed an instrument to measure brand personality, but this model has severe limitations and its validity has yet to be addressed. Despite the large sample of brands that were used to develop this scale, the spectrum of adjectives that were found to be a part of the brand personality are limited and arguably only cover a small part of the universe of adjectives. In contrast to the Big Five factor model of Goldberg (1992), Aaker does not implement a synonym -antonym approach. For example, Aaker argues that both contemporary and outdoorsy are part of the list, but the antonyms to these terms; classic and urban are not present in the model. In addition, as Azoulay and Kapferer (2003) noted, this model failed to divide concepts of psychology and social psychology, and assigned certain groups characteristics as a part of an individual's personality. It is proposed that the scale as developed by Aaker lacks validity, based on the notion that a brand cannot possess personality traits. A brand can only be given traits by persons, and originates as a result of the marketing approach of the managers within the company. The 'personality' association consumers have of the brand are caused by actions of the organization. Findings of brand personality research so far, are therefore not only a simple reflection of what the management successfully or unsuccessfully portrayed to the outside world, it is simply a confirmation of what a company attempts to achieve.

Based on the notion that managers have a strong influence on the brand personality, and can easily sum up the personality characteristics that lead them in their marketing strategy, it is proposed that providing a set model for all brands as Aaker has proposed is not only a unnecessary exercise, it is also limited in its approach. Therefore, the authors propose a different approach to assess a brand's personality. In this exploratory study, managers of the eight franchises in the New Zealand netball competition were asked to provide a list of personality adjectives they feel are associated with their brand. Based on their responses, the researchers compiled a list of 10 adjectives and inserted those in a survey distributed among spectators of netball games. These 10 adjectives are: 1) Competitive, 2) Dynamic, 3) Warm, 4) Professional, 5) Accessible, 6) Passionate, 7) Proud, 8) Exciting, 9) Cool and 10) Attractive.

Of the eight teams in the competition, five teams participated in the study, resulting in a sample of 333 respondents. Those respondents rated the importance of the different adjectives to them in relation to their netball team, as well as how well they perceived the team to represent each one of the adjectives. It is proposed that this research technique is not only a more valid tool to measure brand personality, but a more effective tool as well, giving the organisation much more specific information in regards to their brand positioning.

