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## **Brand personality of two beverages categories**

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## Brand personality of two beverages categories

### Abstract

This study focuses on the 42 traits of brand personality (Aaker 1997) of six drink brands spanning across two drink segments - fizzy drink and mineral water, and measure the congruity of the brands' personalities (five dimension) to the consumer (drinker) of those brands. A number of implications for businesses will be discussed, suggestions for future research are reviewed and the main contributions of the study will also be delineated.

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# Brand Personality of Two Beverages Categories

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## Introduction

### **Brand Personality**

Brand personality is an important notion in the context of brand differentiation, whereby it is currently receiving increasing attention in the marketing literature (Aaker, 1997; Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003; Ang & Lim, 2006; Ekinci & Hosany, 2006; Opoku, Abratt, & Pitt, 2006; Sweeney & Brandon, 2006; Parker, 2009). Products and brands have personalities that can be either conducive or detrimental to their competitiveness in the marketplace (Ogilvy, 1983).

Brand personality is defined as the set of human characteristics or traits that consumers attribute to a brand (Aaker, 1997; Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003; Grohmann, 2009). Human personality characteristics are associated with a brand because people anthropomorphize; more specifically, they transfer human characteristics to inanimate objects (Bower, 1999; Boyer, 1996; Grohmann, 2009; Keller & Lehmann, 2006). Typical examples include animating a “pet rock” or when one references an object, such as a motor boat, by saying “she is a beauty” (Parker, 2009). As such, individuals treat the object as a person (Boyer, 1996). Personifying inanimate objects (Aaker, 1997) and humanizing objects (Levy, 1959) instil in them a distinct personality, simplifying brand choice and stimulating a preference for certain brands (Sirgy, 1982). Examples of brand personality include the characterization by consumers of Oil of Olay as upscale and aspirational; Absolut vodka as cool, hip and contemporary (Aaker, 1997; Plummer, 2000).

Giving consumers something to relate to that is vivid, alive, and more complete than what is portrayed by the core offering is the core element of brand personality (Upshaw, 1995). Therefore, having a strong, favourable brand personality does not only increase consumer preference and usage (Sirgy, 1982; Kim, 2000), but also results in favourable product evaluations (Wang & Yang, 2008),

fosters feelings of comfort and confidence in the minds of consumers (Biel, 1993), improves levels of loyalty and trust (Fournier, 1994, 1998; Hess, Bauer, Kuester, & Huber, 2007; Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello, 2009), creates brand equity (Keller, 1993), and serves as a basis for brand differentiation (Keller, 1993, 2003; Crask & Laskey, 1990; Plummer, 1984; Biel, 1993). Besides, brand personality can also enhance consumer attachment to a brand through their investment of personal meaning (Levy, 1959; Sung & Tinkham, 2005; Grohmann, 2009), assist marketers in developing the emotionally interpreted attributes of brands (Landon, 1974), and enhance the favourability of a brand's image (Phau & Lau, 2001; Sutherland, Marshall, & Parker, 2004). Also, brand personality influences brand recognition and brand beliefs, such as perceived quality (Ramaseshan & Tsao, 2007) and brand associations (Freling & Forbes, 2005). Moreover, brand personality has an impact on a number of important marketing concepts that Keller (2003) includes in his brand equity model (Valette-Florence, Guizani, & Merunka, 2009), such as brand-consumer relationships and brand attachment (Sung & Tinkham, 2005) or brand trust (Hess et al., 2007).

Formation of a brand personality is subject to the various sources that Aaker (1997) categorises as “direct” and “indirect”. The “direct” sources of formation of a brand personality are person-based in which they include not only the set of human characteristics associated with a typical brand user, but also the human characteristics of such individuals as company employees, company CEO, brand endorsers, spokespersons (Aaker, 1997; Helgeson & Supphellen, 2004), and family members who are associated with the brand (Parker, 2009). McCracken (1989) and Grohmann (2009) observed that personality traits can be transferred to a brand through user imagery presented in advertising. For example, user imagery can be projected in advertising by employing a presenter or spokesperson (McCracken, 1989; Rossiter & Percy, 1987), or by projecting actors or models using the product and/or placed in settings or situations that stimulate a feeling, picture, or mood the advertiser wishes to associate with using the product (Aaker, 1996; Grohmann, 2009). Besides human personality characteristics, such human demographic characteristics as age, gender and social class also contribute to the formation of a brand personality (Levy, 1959; Aaker, 1997; Grohmann, 2009). For example, due to distinct user imagery, Virginia Slims tends to be thought of as feminine while Marlboro tends to be perceived as

masculine (Grohmann, 2009); whereas Apple is considered to be young while IBM is older, considering the brands' market entrance recency (Aaker, 1997).

On the other hand, the "indirect" sources of formation of a brand personality involve all the brand-related decisions made by the manager (Helgeson & Supphellen, 2004). These decisions include decisions regarding the product, price, promotion, and distribution (Aaker, 1997; Helgeson & Supphellen, 2004), as well as the product-related attributes, product category associations, brand name, symbol or logo (Batra, Lehmann, & Singh, 1993; Aaker, 1997; Parker, 2009). Hence, it can be seen that brand personality is a broader, more inclusive concept than the image of a typical brand user (Helgeson & Supphellen, 2004). In general, human characteristics associated with a brand are drawn from many possible sources, resulting in a global perception of a brand as if it has an enduring human like personality (Parker, 2009).

### ***Self-congruity***

The congruity between self-concept of an individual and product image of a brand has been studied extensively in the literature of consumer behaviour (Levy, 1959; Dolich, 1969; Landon, 1974; Sirgy, 1982; Sirgy et al., 1997; Grohmann, 2009). Self-congruity theory refers to the assessment that a consumer makes between the image of themselves and the image of a brand (Sirgy, 1986; Sirgy et al., 1997; Aaker, 1996; Grohmann, 2009). Further, Biel (1993, p. 73) placed particular emphasis on the user component as a significant source of imagery, stating that "perhaps the strongest contributor (to brand image) is the impression people have of the brand's users." The findings from this area of research indicate that consumers often have a tendency to choose products and brands that have higher rather than lower levels of congruity (Sirgy, 1985; Sirgy, 1986; Sirgy et al., 1997; Grohmann, 2009).

According to Sirgy (1982), there are four major types of self-congruity – actual self-congruity, ideal self-congruity, social self-congruity, and ideal social self-congruity. The differences between these four types of self-congruity concepts are in reference to the degree of congruity between a typical brand user stereotype and the different facets of self: the present self-concept (actual self-congruity), the ideal self-concept (ideal self-congruity), the self-concept as perceived by significant others (social self-congruity), and, finally, the self-concept as ideally perceived by significant others (ideal social self-congruity) (Birdwell, 1968; Dolich, 1969; Grubb & Grathwohl, 1967; Ross, 1971; Sirgy, 1979, 1980, 1981; Helgeson & Supphellen, 2004; Wang, Yang & Liu, 2009; Grohmann, 2009).

There are two major constructs to the theory of self-congruity – self-image and brand image (Parker, 2009). To study the congruity phenomenon, these two image perceptions are measured and then the difference or

distance between them is determined through standard calculations (Gould, 1991; Graeff, 1996; Sirgy, 1982, 1986; Sutherland, Marshall, & Parker, 2004; Grohmann, 2009). Self-image is a multidimensional perception that changes from situation to situation, and is made up of at least two major dimensions – the "real/actual-self" and the "ideal-self" (Aaker, 1997; Gould, 1991; Graeff, 1996; Sirgy, 1982, 1986; Sutherland, Marshall, & Parker, 2004). As mentioned above, the "real/actual-self" is one's perceptions of the self as now experienced whereas the "ideal-self" is one's perceptions of the self as an imagined ideal, the image of the self as one desires to be (Grubb & Grathwohl, 1967; Rogers, 1959; Sirgy, 1982).

The brand congruence concept within the branding context postulates that the greater the congruity between the human characteristics that consistently and distinctively describe an individual's actual or ideal self and those that describe a brand, the greater the preference for the brand (Malhotra, 1988; Sirgy, 1982). Consumers link strong, favourable, and unique associations to a brand if they favour the brand image (Keller, 1998). Therefore, consumers' perception of an image of a brand can be on direct experience with the brand, as well as through promotion of the brand, and even through observation of the type of people who use the brand or times when the brand is best used (Patterson, 1999). Further, by choosing certain brands, individuals can communicate to others or themselves the type of person they are (actual self-congruity) or the type of person they want to be (ideal self-congruity) (Keller, 1998). Therefore, brand image is built in the memory of the consumer and is delineated by the perceptions and associations held in the memory of the consumer (Keller, 1998). One important part of this perception of brand image is the symbolic concept of brand personality (Parker, 2009), whereby brand personality is considered as a subset of brand image (Aaker, 1996; Biel, 1992; Keller, 1993), due to the significance of personality expression as being a key dimension in representing the image of symbolic brands (Bhat & Reddy, 1998; Keller, 1993; Grohmann, 2009).

### ***The Brand Personality Scale***

Aaker (1997) developed a framework aimed at capturing the key dimensions of brand personality, recognising and acknowledging the importance of brand personality to marketers (Aaker, 1997). The proposed framework was said to be a standard, universal way to measure brand personality where a rigorous set of procedures was employed to develop and evaluate the scale. It started by gathering a list of traits used to measure human personality in psychology and marketing studies, which was then followed by a qualitative study in which she asked respondents to identify all of the traits that were on top of their minds when considering specific brands. Through these procedures, a preliminary list of 309 discrete traits

was generated, which was then reduced to 114 based on respondents' ratings of how descriptive the traits were of brands in general. A series of nationwide studies were then conducted in which Aaker (1997) asked consumers to rate how well the traits described each of the 59 brands that were carefully chosen to represent various categories of products and services. Amongst the brands that were chosen to be tested were food-service and lodging brands, which included McDonald's, Marriot, and Holiday Inn. Five underlying dimensions of brand personality were identified using several complex statistical procedures to analyse the results generated in these studies. These dimensions were named as (1) competence, (2) sincerity,

(3) excitement, (4) sophistication, and (5) ruggedness. The 42 traits used to measure these 5 dimensions are shown in Table 1.

## Objectives

The purpose of the research is to determine the brand personalities of six beverage products via application of the theory of congruence. Specifically, based on the literature review, the aims of this research are to determine the personalities of six beverage brands examined in this study and to determine the degree of personality congruence between the beverage brands and consumers.

Table 1. Dimensions of Brand Personality				
Competence	Sincerity	Excitement	Sophistication	Ruggedness
Reliable	Down-to-earth	Daring	Upper-class	Outdoorsy
Hard-working	Family-oriented	Trendy	Glamorous	Masculine
Secure	Small-town	Exciting	Good-looking	Western
Intelligent	Honest	Spirited	Charming	Tough
Technical	Sincere	Cool	Feminine	Rugged
Corporate	Real	Young	Smooth	
Successful	Wholesome	Imaginative		
Leader	Original	Unique		
Confident	Cheerful	Up-to-date		
	Sentimental	Independent		
	Friendly	contemporary		
The 5 dimensions and 42 traits of Brand Personality. Aaker, J.L. (1997), "Dimensions of Brand Personality", <i>Journal of Marketing Research</i> , Vol. 34, pp. 347 – 356.				

## Research Methodology

### Sample

Data was collected from 393 respondents. Questionnaires were developed based on Aaker's (1997) 5-dimension, 42-item brand personality scale. Two beverage categories were chosen – fizzy drink and mineral water – and each category had three brands, hence the total of six beverage brands in the study. A pen-and-paper survey was conducted at a major university in Australia. A snowball sampling technique was executed where each student was given 6 sets of questionnaires – one of the 6 sets was to be filled out by the student while the remaining 5 were to be given out to their friends and family. This approach was adopted to minimize biases in demographic profiles – age groups, income levels, education levels and occupational differences. As such, the respondents of this study are ecologically valid as they are of different demographic profiles, have access to the beverage brands examined in this study, and are representative of the general population.

### Survey Instrument

Each respondent was first asked to rate 3 different beverage brands in 2 different categories of beverages based on Aaker's (1997) five dimensions of brand personality. Then, the respondents were asked to think of the personality of a typical consumer who would consume the beverages and give ratings accordingly based on Aaker's (1997) 42 traits of brand personality. A seven-point, Likert-type scale was used to record the respondents' responses where 1 = not representative at all and 7 = very representative.

### Brands

The brands chosen for this study were top-of-mind brands in the market. They were well-known brands that were marketed and advertised throughout the state of Western Australia. Moreover, these beverages were easily accessible within the university compounds. Hence, these brands were chosen off-the-shelf. The top three major brands in the fizzy drink category chosen for this study

were Coca-Cola, Pepsi and Solo while Mount Franklin, Cool Ridge and Evian were chosen for the mineral water category. The main purpose of this study is to test perceptions, in which examination of respondents' interactions with the drinks was not considered. More specifically, respondents' experience with all the six beverages was not tested, however, pictures of the beverages were provided as an informational cue. This research method is dissimilar to that of Siguaw, Mattila, & Austin's (1999) where the respondents were asked not to rate the restaurants in which they were not familiar with. With our pictorial assistance, respondents would provide ratings accordingly with the aid of the pictures – if they had not already known of such brand(s).

## Results and Analysis

### *Testing on Five Dimensions*

Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) (Tukey test) was conducted to test if there was any significant difference amongst the three beverage brands for each personality dimensions.

Within the category of fizzy drinks, Coca Cola was perceived as being more sincere (mean = 4.48), exciting (mean = 5.34) and competent (mean = 5.09) than the other two brands. Solo was seen as being the least sincere (mean = 4.03), competent (mean = 4.17) and sophisticated (mean = 3.52) of the three brands. The only other point of significant differentiation amongst the three fizzy drinks was on the dimension of competent ( $p < 0.001$ ). As far as our respondents were concerned, none of these fizzy drinks had created a brand personality that distinguished one fizzy drink from the other two on the trait of ruggedness.

Within the category of mineral water, Mount Franklin was perceived as being more sincere (mean = 5.18) and competent (mean = 4.76) than the other two brands. Cool Ridge was seen as being the least competence (mean = 4.30) and sophisticated (mean = 3.91) of the three brands. As far as our respondents were concerned, none of these mineral water brands had created a brand personality that distinguished one mineral water drink from the other two on the traits of excitement and ruggedness.

Overall, the two drink categories were differentiated to the greatest extent on the dimension of sincerity ( $p < 0.001$ ). As one might expect, mineral water drinks were perceived more sincere (mean = 4.78) than the fizzy drinks (mean = 4.21). While sincerity was the only distinctive characteristic that our respondents identified for mineral water drinks, they were also perceived to be more sophisticated (mean = 4.51,  $p < 0.001$ ) but less exciting (mean = 3.72) and less rugged (mean = 3.41) than the fizzy drink category. Moreover, fizzy drinks were perceived to be the more competent (mean = 4.61,  $p < 0.001$ ) than the mineral water category.

### *Testing the Congruity between the Drink Personality and the Drinker Personality*

Paired samples t-test was conducted to test the congruity between the personality of the beverage brand and the personality of the drinker. The test would be focusing on the dominant personality for each brand that had congruity with the consumer's personality.

**Coca Cola fizzy drink** From all five dimensions of brand personality, excitement had the strongest congruity ( $r=0.659$ ) while the others had medium or weak positive congruity. The dominant brand personality for Coca Cola was excitement. Based on paired samples t-test result, it showed that the personality dimensions of sincerity and ruggedness of Coca Cola would be transferred to the consumer but the dominant personality of Coca Cola (excitement) and other two personalities would not.

**Pepsi fizzy drink** From all five dimensions of brand personality, excitement had the strongest congruity ( $r=0.692$ ) while the others had strong or medium positive congruity. The dominant brand personality for Pepsi was excitement. Paired samples t-test results showed that the dominant brand personality of Pepsi would be transferred to the consumer, followed by sincerity and ruggedness, which is in contrary to what was found for Coca Cola.

**Solo fizzy drink** From all five dimensions of brand personality, excitement had the strongest congruity ( $r=0.560$ ) while the others had medium positive congruity. The dominant brand personality for Solo was excitement. Paired sample t-test results indicated that all brand personalities except "competence" of Solo would be transferred to the consumer.

**Mount Franklin mineral water** From all five dimensions of brand personality, ruggedness had the strongest congruity ( $r=0.422$ ) while the others had weak positive congruity. The dominant brand personality for Mount Franklin was sincerity. The dominant brand personality of Mount Franklin was not transferrable to the consumer based on the result of paired samples t-test.

**Cool Ridge mineral water** From all five dimensions of brand personality, excitement had the strongest congruity ( $r=0.484$ ) while the others had medium or weak congruity. The dominant brand personality for Cool Ridge was sincerity. Cool Ridge also had sincerity as its dominant brand personality in the mineral water category but the dominant personality would be transferred to the consumer based on paired samples t-test results.

**Evian mineral water** From all five dimensions of brand personality, ruggedness had the strongest congruity ( $r=0.706$ ) while the others had medium congruity. The dominant brand personality for Evian was sophistication, which differentiated Evian from other mineral water brands. The dominant personality would be transferred to the consumer based on paired samples t-test result.

## Discussion and Implications

### *Developing a Personality*

A comparison of brand personality profiles reveals that the points of differentiation seem to correspond with the emphases of the drinks' marketing communication, the nature of products, the quality of products and their overall performance in the market. Based on the limited sample, it indicates that brand personality can be an effective means to differentiate one brand of drink from another and some brands of drinks have done this strategy well. However, the findings of this study also provide concrete evidence to indicate that the majority of brands of drinks do not effectively use brand personality as a means of brand differentiation, and much improvement is needed.

### *Five Dimensions of Brand Personality*

**Point-of-parity** Based on the MANOVA results, excitement and competence can be used as the point of parity for fizzy drinks; whereas sincerity and sophistication can be used as mineral water drink's point-of-parity.

**Fizzy drink** Within the category of fizzy drinks, Coca Cola has the strongest points of differentiation on the dimensions of sincerity, excitement and sophistication. Coca Cola has been the number-one fizzy drink brand for a long time and this dominance may well be driving respondents' perceptions that it is the most competent of the three brands examined.

Additionally, as compared to Pepsi and Solo, we see Coca Cola's advertising and sales-promotion efforts as having a stronger and more consistent emphasis on excitement (e.g. portrayed as refreshing and cute in their animated advertisements). These efforts by Coca Cola may enable the brand to evoke a greater sense of excitement among consumers and explain why Pepsi has sought to imitate what Coca Cola has done.

On the other hand, our respondents perceived Solo to be the least sincere, sophisticated and rugged among the three brands. It shows that Solo has the least top-of-mind awareness amongst consumers. As such, Solo needs to improve on their marketing communication and increase awareness. Additionally, Solo needs to focus on one brand personality, such as sophistication (recommended), to create point of differentiation from other two brands because Pepsi and Coca Cola are weak in the brand personality dimension of sophistication. For example, Solo can produce premium products or create innovative advertisements with a sophisticated image. As Coca Cola and Pepsi are best known for their personality dimension of excitement, Solo should avoid the adoption of the same personality dimension as their counterparts.

Pepsi is distinctively differentiated from Coca Cola and Solo on the personality dimension of ruggedness, but it is significantly differentiated on the personality dimension of

competence. It shows that Pepsi also needs to improve on their marketing communication and focus on one brand personality, especially ruggedness (recommended), to create point of differentiation from the other two brands because Pepsi has the highest means in the ruggedness dimension.

**Mineral drink** Fewer point of differentiation was found among mineral water drinks. These findings are consistent with the fact that brands in mineral water category run less advertising than fizzy drinks. That is why consumers receive less information regarding the brands and, therefore, may have greater difficulty distinguishing one brand from another. Nevertheless, the differences in brand personalities that emerged in this study seem to correspond with the brand names and general concepts of the drink categories examined.

Within the category of mineral water, Mount Franklin and Cool Ridge have sincerity as their dominant brand personality and sophistication is the dominant brand personality for Evian. Mount Franklin has the strongest points in sincerity and competence but Cool Ridge has the weakest points in competence and sophistication. There are no distinctive differentiations amongst the three brands on the personality dimensions of excitement and ruggedness. It shows that Mount Franklin has sincerity as its point of parity in the category of mineral water and competence as its point of differentiation from the other two brands. On the other hand, Evian is not significantly differentiated on all brand personalities, thus Evian must improve on their marketing communication and focus on sophistication to create a point of differentiation and sincerity as its point of parity. Cool Ridge needs to improve on their marketing communication so that their awareness in the market can be increased and a point of differentiation can be created in the minds' of consumers. Cool Ridge should also create a point of difference by focusing on the personality dimensions of excitement or ruggedness because Mount Franklin and Evian have the weakest points on these dimensions.

### *Congruity of Drink Personality and Drinker Personality*

**Fizzy Drink** Within the fizzy drink category, Coca Cola, Pepsi and Solo have excitement as their dominant personality but only Pepsi and Solo have congruity between their dominant brand personality and the consumer's personality. There is no congruity between Coca Cola and its consumers because it is a brand that is extensively known and well publicized throughout the world. As such, it has become a little "too common" amongst the consumers, which might have explained the absence of congruity between the brand's personality and that of the consumers'. Based on these findings, it is advisable for brand managers of fizzy drinks to create distinctive brand personalities that are congruent with those of the consumers' via adoption of the other four personality

dimensions (i.e. sincerity, sophistication, competence, and ruggedness).

**Mineral Water** Within the mineral water category, Mount Franklin and Cool Ridge have sincerity as their dominant personalities while Evian has sophistication as its dominant brand personality. Cool Ridge and Evian have their dominant personalities congruent with those of their consumers' Similar to Coca Cola's prognosis, Mount Franklin's personality is not congruent with that of the consumer's because it is a widely known brand in Australia, and thus has become somewhat common amongst the consumers. Based on these findings, it is recommended for brand managers of mineral water drinks to create distinctive brand personalities via the employment of the other four dimensions of personalities – excitement, sophistication, competence, and ruggedness, so that points of differentiation may be created.

**Discussion for Congruity** Additionally, in order to evoke purchase intention, brand managers also need to take into consideration the importance of establishing congruency between the personality of the brand and that of the consumer's. As was aforementioned, the greater the congruity between the human characteristics that consistently and distinctively describe an individual's actual or ideal self and those that describe a brand is, the greater the preference for the brand (Aaker, 1997; Malhotra, 1988; Sirgy, 1982). Therefore, it is essential for marketing managers to create brand personalities which consumers can relate to, those that describe an individual – who s/he is, or those that personify the ideal personality for consumers – who s/he wants to be. Typical advertising examples include depicting the image of congruity between the personality of the consumed-brand and its consumer. As such, this example is consistent with that of McCracken's (1989), Rossiter and Percy's (1987), where the use of actors, or other sorts of celebrities or personalities, is aimed at stimulating consumers' association with the brand (Aaker 1996; Grohmann 2009).

## Concluding Comments

This study was focused on testing congruency between the personalities of six beverage brands and those of consumers, generalization cannot be made onto other fields or sectors as the scope of this study may not be applicable. Hence, future research should be done on such fields and sectors as restaurants, food, other fast moving consumer goods and the like. Also, due to the nature of the products covered in this study, where they are of low-involvement and low-risk, consumers may not be as particular and attentive as if they were in the process of purchasing high-involvement and high-risk products, which include such categories as automobile, real estate and luxury goods, where they would be engaged in extensive search for information, comparison of prices, attributes, benefits and functions of brands/products in consideration. As noted in

the consumer behaviour literature, food products are considered as low-involvement goods, largely due to the food costs, which represent a relatively small share of personal or household income (Bell & Marshall, 2003), and the nature of them being regular purchase items (Beharrell & Dennison, 1995; Grunert, Baadsgaard, Larsen, & Madsen, 1996; Steenkamp, 1998; Costa, Schoolmeester, Dekker, & Jongen, 2003). The sample size for this study can also be extended to different demographic groups.

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