Exploration of Brand Personality Dimensions and its relationship with Human Personality – A Study with reference to Motor Bikes

SUMMARY OF THE THESIS

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1. Introduction

Difference in behaviour from individual to individual has been a topic of research for many scholars from long time. The logic in this interest can be understood by the fact that distinctiveness in people can be taken as ground to understand the behaviour of individuals. This gave rise to the study of personality which till date is studied and understand the construct using which the distinctiveness can be understood. One of the earlier attempts of understanding personality of individuals was termed as personality psychology. Since then personality literature has been evolving through works on personality like psychoanalysis, Neo-Psychoanalytic School of Personality Psychology, Humanistic School of Personality Psychology, Behavioural School of Personality Psychology, Genetic/Biological School of Personality Psychology, Trait School of Personality Psychology and Cognitive/REBT school of Personality Psychology.

Research on personality would require to measure it. There are various methods by which personality can be measured like: Idiographic Case Studies, Statistical/Correlational, Psychometric, Observation, Quasi-Experiments and True Experiments. Following the argument of literature like statistical research can only be applied well to Trait School of Personality Psychology, trait school was adopted for the current study to measure personality.

The most accepted model of personality using traits is FIVE FACTOR model is used in current study to measure human personality. The five basic dimension of personality as per FIVE FACTOR model were: Extraversion, Agreeableness, Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness and Neuroticism. BIG FIVE model initially has the following dimensions: Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability and Culture. Later on these dimensions were refined to: Extraversion, Neuroticism, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness and Openness. These five dimensions of human personality are used in current study.

Brand is derived from the word “to burn”. Early cattle pullers would put a burn mark on livestock so that they can be identified from many similar looking cattle. It was only during and after industrialization that the need of marks or symbols for identification has seen a tangentially growing pattern. Industrialization has seen mass production by multiple manufacturers. The products were similar in looks. This was the time when
brand as an identification mark was used commercially at large scale. With time, the importance of brands has seen an upward trend in industry and academia both.

Brands play multiple roles like: Legal Instrument, Logo, Company, Shorthand, Risk Reducer, Identity System, Image in Consumers mind, Value System, Personality, Relationship, Adding Value and evolving entity. It is important to note that marketing efforts have given brands these roles. Brands have not derived these roles by themselves. Brands do not only drive their roles from marketer’s communication which associates the brand with anything but each encounter of brand results into formation of some association. Minute observation and understanding of these associations is very important to understand the concept of Brand and related concepts like Brand Personality. Brand Personality is defined as “the set of human characteristics associated with a brand”. Although, literature has been talking of brand associations and brands acquiring personalities since long but it was only after Aaker work that the concept got worldwide attention. The debate on brand personality started from product personality. Product personality takes its roots in product symbolism which is relatively an old concept.

Aaker gave brand personality scale in 1997. Aaker also took the symbolic use of brand as a base for understanding brand personality construct. Aaker found the current scales of brand personality to be lacking in validity and tried to devised a framework for brand personality dimensions which would be generalizable across all product categories. Aaker’s work resulted into 5 dimensions of brand personality having 15 facets and 42 traits were identified. The five dimensions of brand personality were: Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication and Ruggedness. Sincerity and Excitement has 4, Competence 3, and Sophistication and Ruggedness has 2 facets each.

2. Literature Review

The practice of giving names to living and non-livings which started somewhere in 1800 was the starting point of brand and branding. Rise of brand personality has its root in human personality. With mass consumption on rise, understanding of human personality and consumption patterns became vital for practitioners. Consumption patterns of consumers’ made scholars to believe that human personality characteristics are inherent to brands and can be mirrored.
Marketers today have agreed that one of the most important intangible asset which they can have is a brand. They have tried hard to understand brand and metaphors like brand personality. With time, understanding of human-brand personality relationship for brand has become vital. Calling products as symbolic in nature could be seen as the starting point of the journey of Human-Brand personality relationship. Idea of product symbolism was later on supported by many scholars when studies found products to be able of communicating with customers and symbolic meaning of products can be used to influence behaviour of consumer. Starting literature has resulted into confusion over the acceptance of the idea that there exists relationship between human and brand personality. Still, there were many who were against this confusion and repeatedly advocated that there exists relationship. These scholars has blamed wrong methodology for not finding out a clear relationship between human and brand personality. During these debates, despite lack of strong empirical evidence, literature was converging to the viewpoint that there exists a relationship between personality and product choice. This was later on supported to the extent that associations between consumers and their possession were called so much strong that possessions of consumers have become part of their personalities and these possessions can be used to define their owners and in some cases even becoming their extended self.

Even till this time, researchers are trying to understand the relationship from different perspectives using direct and indirect methods and attempts have been recorded in literature where different paths were adopted to study the relationship. The research on Brand personality and Human Personality relationship has picked up pace after Aaker. It was that pioneer work that entire Brand personality literature can be divided in two parts – Pre Aaker and Post Aaker. Her work has excited many to take on brand personality study across the globe. In a stream which Aaker work has started, validation of her work was one. There are studies that have tested Aaker Brand personality Scale (here onwards BPS) and found it to be good and giving better results. Popularity of Brand personality Scale can be judged from the fact that scholars in United States of America, Australia, India, North Africa, Scandinavia and Thailand have operationalized BPS without any change across the categories of restaurants, Action-Sports Clothing, Corporate Brands–IT, Mobile Phone, Qualitative Studies and Universities respectively.

With acceptance of Aaker came its criticism. Literature witnessed numerous studies which stated that dimensions proposed by Aaker were either not stable, or the number of
dimensions are more or less that of proposed by Aaker. India was also among those countries who have witnessed some studies questioning the applicability of brand personality scale without change in India.

3. Rational of the Study

Brand personality scale proposed by Aaker is relatively new and pioneer in the field of brand personality. Since its development in 1997, Aaker scale has been used massively across variety of product categories and across regions. Studies carried out in different countries suggested that brand personality scale proposed by Aaker cannot be generalized across regions and across product categories as application of the same scale has resulted into different number of brand personality dimensions. Some studies has found culture specific dimensions of brand personality for the countries belonging to Asian countries like China and Japan. Unfortunately, India has been out of this race. Strong advocacy of earlier studies that Aaker scale should not be generalized without change across regions has acted as seed for this study. This gap is attempted to be filled up by this study.

It is also suggested in earlier studies that a high involvement product, which is consumed socially and high in utility and exposure is a good product to carry out a brand personality study. Moreover, the base of brand personality studies has been automobile products only. Earlier researches which has played a pivotal role in advancing the concept of brand personality were on automobiles. Currently, automobile industry in contributing 22 percent to the manufacturing GDP of India. Two wheelers (specifically bikes) selected in current study belong to automobile industry. The Indian two wheeler industry is poised at INR 810 billion. Motor bikes are accounting for more than 70 percent of automobile industry. Moreover, two wheelers are high utility, socially sued and high involvement product. It is highly advisable to leave such a huge industry unattended from the research of brand personality. And hence, motor bikes were taken as product to study for brand personality in current research.

4. Research Methodology

This section explains objectives of the study, area of the study, sampling technique adopted, sample size, data collection instrument used, data collection method, statistical techniques used, limitation and organization of study.
4.1 Objectives

The main aim of this study is to check the applicability of Aaker’s scale of brand personality in India in case of motor bike consumers and to identify relationship between human personality and brand personality for motor bikes. The following sub objectives have been framed to achieve this task:

- To check the validity of Aaker’s brand personality dimensions/scale for major brands of motor bikes in India;
- to find out the dimensions of brand personality of motor bike’s brands;
- to find out the brand personalities of major motor bike brands;
- to examine the relationship between brand personality and human personality for various brands of motor bikes; and
- to check the contribution of brand personality and human personality on purchase behaviour and satisfaction of consumer.

4.2 Area of Study and Sampling

Haryana is taken as the area of this study. First question for defining the area of study is to define the universe of the study. The universe comprises of all those individual, who are of interest for any particular study and about whom the research is being carried out. The current research is addressed to the entire state of Haryana. Hence, population of Haryana state is considered as universe of the study.

Multistage cluster cum convenience sampling was adopted to select the samples in this study. In first stage, process of sampling is started with administrative setup of Haryana state. Government of Haryana has divided the state into four administrative divisions or stratas (Hisar, Rohtak, Ambala and Gurgaon). Each administrative division has following districts in it:

i. Hisar – Hisar, Bhiwani, Sirsa, Fatehabad, Jind;
ii. Rohtak – Rohtak, Jhajjhar, Sonepat, Panipat, Karnal;
iii. Ambala – Ambala, Panchkula, Kaithal, Yamunanagar, Kurukshetra; and
iv. Gurgaon – Gurgaon, Faridabad, Rewari, Mahendergarh, Mewat, Palwal

This administrative setup is taken as sample frame in current study. In second stage, random sampling was adopted to select two districts from each division. The randomly
selected districts were: Hisar, Bhiwani, Rohtak, Karnal, Faridabad, Mahendergarh, Yamunanagar and Panchkula. In third stage, convenience sampling was adopted to record the responses of respondents from each of the selected district.

4.3. Data Collection Instrument

Tool used to collected data is referred as data collection instrument. Primary data for any research study can be collected using various data collection instruments like - questionnaire, focus groups, interviews, observational checklists etc.. All the tools of data collection except questionnaire takes the data collection exercise into qualitative instruments which requires a trained psychologist to collect data. Keeping in mind the budget and time constraints of the current study, the questionnaire as a tool of data collection is adopted. Data on questionnaire can be recorded in multiple ways like – questionnaire given to the respondent and respondent fills up the questionnaire (Self-reporting method), researcher asks the questions of questionnaire from respondent orally, respondent replies back and researcher on the behalf of respondent fills the answer in the questionnaire (Schedule). Although, self-reporting is advocated as the better and reliable method to gather data but considering the subject matter of study (concept of brand personality and responses for it rests on the ability of respondent to assume a non-living entity (motor bike in this study) as a living being and then replying to the questions), which is relatively new, might requires the researcher involvement in explaining a question to respondent. Hence, a mixed approach of self-reporting-cum-scheduling was adopted for data collection. Moreover, the subject matter was properly briefed to respondents before of the questions in questionnaire.

Human Personality was operationalized using Big Five Inventory (BFI) (Big Five Inventory is the most accepted measure of Human Personality). Big Five Inventory has 44 items in it. Each of the item is measuring responses on five point Likert scale. All the instructions suggested by developers were followed strictly during data collection. The 44 items in the scale contains positively and negatively worded traits. Score on five personality dimensions were calculated using the formula suggested by the original authors.

Brand personality was operationalized using Brand Personality Scale (BPS) developed by Aaker. Scale has 42 items in it. All items were measured using five point Likert scale. Scale was used in full compliance with the instructions suggested by Aaker.
Brand Personality Scale is considered as the largest and most widely accepted effort to measure brand personality. The final structured questionnaire was divided into four parts. First part contains the items measuring brand personality using Brand Personality Scale. Second part of questionnaire contains 44 items measuring human personality using Big Five Inventory. Third part of questionnaire contains items relating to satisfaction of respondents for their motorbike. Fourth part contains items measuring demographics of respondents.

4.4. Sample Size

To determine the sample size for the study, a pilot study was carried out with 150 respondents. Using sample size, standard deviation of pilot study and choosing precision level of five percent the sample size is calculated as 752.95 (753). This depicts that around 750 questionnaires need to be filled up to cover the deviation in the population. This sample size is to be distributed among the eight districts of Haryana which are already selected. Considering the response rate or return rate of 74 percent (as is found in pilot study), it is considered that the final study would also have response rate around 74 percent. Hence, it was decided that 125 questionnaires to be filled up from each of the eight districts. This culminates the sample size to 1000.

4.5. Statistical Techniques

Results for the constructs of interest can only be achieved by subjecting the data to various statistical techniques. There are many statistical techniques available in literature. Thus, it is important to select only relevant statistical technique which gives the desired results. This study has used SPSS and AMOS to apply the following statistical techniques:

- Descriptives
- t-test
- Correlation,
- Item-to-total correlation
- Cronbach alpha
- Exploratory factor analysis
- Confirmatory factor analysis
4.6. Hypothesis

To achieve the objectives of the study, following hypothesis are formulated from literature review:

- H1: There exists relationship between human personality and brand personality for motor bikes in India.
- H2: Aaker scale is not absolutely generalizable for motor bikes in India
- H2a: There are culture specific dimensions of brand personality for motor bikes in India.
- H2b: There are more than five dimensions of brand personality for motor bikes in India.

4.7. Limitations

The study is carried out in Haryana. Hence, results of the study should not be generalized without any further empirical support across India (considering the diversity of the country). This will results into generalized error.

Study is based on the results derived from primary data. Data was collected using mix of self-reporting and schedule. Data collected from self-reporting questionnaire may not be free from biasness of one or another form. Moreover, the subject matter of brand personality is relatively newer construct in marketing. It involves lot of imagination on respondent part (human traits are to be transferred to non-human elements – motor bikes in this study). The process of imagination and recording responses on the basis of this capability of respondent might have given rise to sampling errors.

Study has drawn results for relationship between brand personality and human personality in general and for three major motor bikes brands in particular (Splendor, Discover and Pulsar). Extension of these results across all present brands of motor bikes should be exercised with caution. Generalizability of results across Haryana based on the findings generated from a sample size of 717 can also be treated as a limitation. This sample size might not be sufficient to cover the variation of the entire state.
5. Finding and Conclusion

- Study revealed that motor bikes of Bajaj, Honda, Hero MotoCorp, Royal Enfield and TVS are being used in Haryana. Hero MotoCorp’s Splendor, Bajaj’s Pulsar and Bajaj’s Discover are found out to be three major bike brands in Haryana. Splendor is the highest used brand of motor bike followed by Discover and Pulsar.
- Results depicts that lower segment motor bikes (100 CC) are most preferred followed by middle segment (150 CC) and high end motor bikes (225 CC). That shows that light motor bikes are the preference of consumers in Haryana.
- Aaker’s scale consist of 42 traits. Aaker argued that the scale of brand personality can be generalized across countries and products (Brands). However in present study, the scale does not confirm to the arguments of generalizability. In case of motor bikes, ‘feminine’ is not at all applicable in India stating that Indian consumers do not consider motor bike to be feminine in nature. ‘Western’ and ‘small town’ are also found to be not applicable to brand personality of motor bikes in India. Other traits not applicable for motor bikes in India are ‘down to earth’, ‘small town’, ‘family oriented’, ‘smooth’, ‘sincere’, ‘successful’, ‘sentimental’ and ‘independent’.
- This study confirms the four of five brand personality dimensions proposed by Aaker as general dimensions. Brand personality dimensions of ‘sophisticated’, ‘competent’, ‘sincere’ and ‘rugged’ given by Aaker are retained for motor bikes brands in India. Whereas one brand personality dimension proposed by Aaker – ‘excitement’ has been bifurcated into two dimensions in current study. Two new dimensions proposed in this study are: ‘conspicuous’ and ‘imaginative’. Hence, the study proposes six dimensions of brand personality - ‘sophistication’, ‘competence’, ‘conspicuousness’, ‘sincerity’, ‘ruggedness’ and ‘imaginative’.
- Present study found six dimensions of brand personality. The six dimensions with their explanation are: **Sophistication** – Eye catcher which catches the attention because it is designed keeping in mind the current styles. Meant for well off people in society. Youngness, excitement and charm differentiate it from others. **Competence** – Secureness, reliability and honesty makes this motor bike anxiety free and trustable. Sense of security is felt for this motor bike because of its
cutting edge technology, intelligence and confidence. **Conspicuousness** – An updated, trendy, worriless motor bike. Usage of this motor bike display the wealth and leave impression in society. It is full of spirit and social motor bike. **Sincerity** – A value of money motor bike. It does not believe in impression management. Emphasis is on the originality and real motor bike utility rather than show-off components. It is a complete motor bike. **Ruggedness** – A high quality, robustly built up and tough motor bike. Robust enough to face worst driving conditions. It is known for its muscles, masculinity and hardworking nature. **Imaginative** – A unique motor bike in terms of its updation and contemporariness. This motor bike have something which the users might imagine for a motor bike to have.

- **Splendor** is built for tough conditions. It is a robust bike ready to face bad road conditions. The differentiating dimension for brand personality of Splendor is ‘ruggedness’.
- **Bajaj Discover** is a ‘sincere’ motor bike. This makes Discover a complete motor bike and it makes owner to feel friendly with it. Discover is real, original and is a value for money motor bike.
- **Bajaj pulsar** is sophisticated and conspicuous as these are the differentiating brand personality dimensions which are unique to Bajaj Pulsar. No other motor bike is sophisticated and conspicuous.
- For light weight motor bikes, functional attributes are more important than nonfunctional attributes.
- Individuals with open personality are not particular about the specific personality of motor bike brand. They would rather prefer any brand of motor bike having any personality that comes their way.
- Consumers who are agreeable would prefer a sincere motor bike. At the same time, these individuals would avoid purchasing sophisticated motor bikes. For agreeable customers, using bike to display their status does not make sense. Rather good built up quality and originality of motor bike catches there attraction.
- Consumers who are extrovert by personality would prefer a competent and conspicuous motor bike. Such individuals like a motor bike which they can use with proud in society. Extravert customers want their motor bike to be having reliable technology which makes their bike and themselves look intelligent in society.
• Individuals with conscientiousness personality are expected to prefer a competent and sincere motor bike. These consumers prefer originality, good built up quality, technology, value for money motor bike. Such people would prefer fully loaded motor bike.

• Study found no relationship between individuals who are having neurotic personality and the brand personality of motor bikes which they are using.

• Consumers who are ‘agreeable’ and ‘conscientious’ are found out to be more satisfied than other personality type individuals. This signifies that those motor bike users who are ‘agreeable’ and ‘conscientious’ are expected to be more satisfied. Study found out that ‘conscientiousness’ is having more contribution to the satisfaction level of motor bike users. More a person is agreeable and conscientiousness, more he is expected to be satisfied with the purchase of motor bike.

• Brand personality dimensions of ‘sincerity’ and ‘imaginative’ is found out to be contributing to the satisfaction level of customers of motor bikes. Sincerity is a major contributor to the satisfaction stating that motor bikes which are sincere are expected to satisfy the customers more. More the motor bike is sincere and imaginative, high would be the satisfaction level of customers.

• Users of all three major motor bikes are satisfied from their purchase. This signifies that motor bike manufacturers have been successful in making their consumers happy about their performance. Reference groups and word of mouth plays a pivotal role in the purchase and post purchase evaluation of high involvement products. Consumers being satisfied depicts that motor bikes have been successful in spreading positive word of mouth from its owners.