

DETERMINING THE BRAND PERSONALITY OF NIKE IN SLOVAKIA

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Abstract

Brand personality is defined as human characteristics projected into a brand. This construct has multiple uses in marketing - brand personality can diverse the brand from other brands, it creates positive brand equity and can be used as a strong basis for marketing communication. The concept of brand personality originated in human psychology. Because of the differences in personalities within cultures, there has been a need to examine the brand personality construct from an international perspective. The purpose of this paper is to describe the personality of the brand Nike from the perspective of Slovak consumers. An online survey with a sample of 229 Slovak consumers was carried out with the main goal to describe Nike as a person, characterize the friends of the brand and suggest hobbies of the brand. Slovaks see the brand as an active man, a winner and a sportsman. His hobbies are all kinds of sports, and fashion and he is very health-conscious. His friends are also very active, attractive and young. It is in accordance with the overall image of the brand communicated worldwide no major differences in brand image and brand perception were found.

Key words:

Brand. Nike. Personality. Slovak consumers.

1 Literature review

Brand personality is defined as “the set of human characteristics associated with a brand”.¹ This concept works because consumers often describe the brands with help of human personality traits. By assuming the brand as a person, it can create a self-expressive benefit that becomes a vehicle for the customer to express his or her own personality.² They can easily view a brand as having a friendly or exciting personality or as a person with whom they may choose to have a relationship.³ In clinical psychology, numerous attributes used to describe human personality can be limited to number of classes composed of five major factors (a model known as the Big Five human personality dimensions). By assuming the brand as a person, it can create a self-expressive benefit that becomes a vehicle for the customer to express his or her own personality.⁴ Kotler and Keller confirmed customer usually choose the brands which match their self-image or sometimes consumers choose a brand based on their ideal self-image or social self-image.⁵ To define a brand any human feature can be used. The associations might be linked to certain demographic features (such as age, or gender), beliefs, hobbies, and personality traits.⁶

¹ AAKER, J. L.: Dimension of brand personality. In *Journal of Marketing Research*, 1997, Vol. 4, No. 3, p. 347.

² Ibidem, p. 349.

³ BLACKSTON, M.: Observations: Building brand equity by managing the brand's relationships. In *Journal of Advertising Research*, 2000, Vol. 40, No. 6, p. 101.

⁴ AAKER, J. L.: Dimension of brand personality. In *Journal of Marketing Research*, 1997, Vol. 4, No. 3, p. 352.

⁵ KOTLER, P., KELLER, K. L.: *Marketing Management*. 15th Edition. Pearson India : Uttar radesh, 2016, p. 342.

⁶ ROJAS-MÉNDEZ, J. I., ERENCHUN-PODLECH, I., SILVA-OLAVE, E.: The Ford Brand Personality in Chile. In *Corporate Reputation Review*, 2004, Vol. 7, No. 3, p. 240.

According to Khani et al, brand personality comes from three main sources:⁷

- the relationship that customers have with the brand;
- the image which is a company trying to present;
- the unique features of product.

Brand personality, as a construct, has multiple uses in marketing. King found brand personality to be the most important to identify personal meaning for the consumer.⁸ Lannon and Cooper added that brand personality is needed as information for marketers when developing communication strategy.⁹ In order to effectively market and position a brand marketers must understand and develop the personality of a brand.¹⁰ Other authors have suggested that brand personality should be seen as a more global construct: a key determinant of brand equity.¹¹ Measuring the personality congruence between brands and sporting events can provide marketers with a practical tool that is conveniently applicable for connecting the right brand to the right sporting event.¹² Consumers can make attributions about the brand's personality, "inner character," goals and values. In some marketing strategies, the brand is actually made to be "alive" and action-oriented.¹³ Fournier adds brand personality has an impact on various key variables, such as attitude, preference, usage imagery, and emotion.¹⁴

Aaker used methods similar to human psychology to identify five brand personality dimensions: sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness.¹⁵ Further researches suggested different traits, e.g. Levy divided brand personality into five dimensions, which are excitement, competence, peacefulness, sincerity, and sophistication.¹⁶ In the Japanese context there was no Ruggedness dimension as in the American study, and another dimension – Peacefulness, was identified as a very strong trait. In Spain, in addition to the Sincerity, Excitement and Sophistication dimensions (that also existed in the USA and Japan), Peacefulness (found in Japan but not in the USA) and Passion (not found in the other two countries) were identified. In Brazil, the dimensions of brand personality were Credibility, Joy, Audacity,

⁷ KHANI, S. et al: The Relationship of Appliance Consumer Personality Trait, Brand Personality, Brand Loyalty and Brand Equity in the Mobile Phone Industry. In *International Journal of Fundamental Psychology & Social Sciences*, 2013, Vol. 3, No. 4, p. 65.

⁸ For more information, see: KING, S.: Branding Opportunities in Financial Services. In *Proceedings of the Advertising and Marketing Financial Services Conference*. London : MRS Press, 1989.

⁹ LANNON, J., COOPER P.: Humanistic advertising: a holistic cultural perspective. In *International Journal of Advertising*, 1983, Vol. 2, No. 3, p. 195-213.

¹⁰ BRAUNSTEIN, J., ROSS, S.: Brand personality in sport: Dimension Analysis and General Scale Development. In *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 2010, Vol. 19, No. 1, p. 11.

¹¹ BIEL, A.: *Converting Image into Equity. Brand Equity and Advertising*. Hillsdale, NJ : Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1993, p. 67-83.

¹² LEE, H. S., CHO, C. H.: The matching effect of brand and sporting event personality: Sponsorship implications. In *Journal of Sport Management*, 2009, Vol. 23, No. 1, p. 63.

¹³ AAKER, J., FOURNIER, S.: A brand as a character, a partner and a person: three perspectives on the question of brand personality. In *Advances in Consumer Research*, 1995, Vol. 22, No. 4, p. 393.

¹⁴ FOURNIER, S.: Consumers and their brands: Developing relationship theory in consumer research. In *The Journal of Consumer Research*, 1998, Vol. 4, No. 4, p. 344.

¹⁵ AAKER, J. L.: Dimension of brand personality. In *Journal of Marketing Research*, 1997, Vol. 4, No. 3, p. 349.

¹⁶ LEVY, S., ROOK, W.: *Brands, Consumers, Symbols and Research*: Sidney : J Levy on Marketing, Sage Publications, 1999, p. 203-212.

Sophistication and Sensitivity.¹⁷ Because of the differences in personalities within cultures, there has been a need to examine the brand personality construct from an international perspective.

2 Research methods

The participants were 229 adult Slovak subjects. Sixty-five percent of the respondents were female and 35 percent male. Thirty-six percent of them had a university degree, 33 percent were undergraduate students and the rest had high-school education. Average age was 26 years with standard deviation of 5.17. They were chosen on principles of convenience sampling and the participants have been selected from available population. Respondents were presented a questionnaire. First they were asked if they know the brand and only those reported knowing it were considered for the study. Then they were asked to imagine Apple was a person. "What kind of person it would be?", "Who would be Apple friends with?", "What kind of hobby it would have?", "Would it be male or a female?" – these were the questions to describe the brand personality. To visualize the results from the open-ended questions, word cloud Tagxedo was used.

3 Research results

The personality of Nike is very much related to the product that the company sells (active and athletic) as well as the characteristic of athletes (competitive) and of a heroic person (determined and focused).¹⁸ According to Mark & Pearson, Nike is perceived as a hero, the one who triumphs, gets through challenges and, in doing so, is an inspiration to all of us, it is a warrior and a leader.¹⁹ Nike's personality is athletic. The company is positioned as providing the best athletic gear to all athletes no matter what sport. They have successful products in every major sport around the world. The brand created a personality of being a cool, successful and athletic.²⁰ According to Slovak consumers, concerning the demographics of Nike's personality, 70 percent of Slovaks see it as a man and for 30 percent it is a woman. The average age is 33 years, ranging from 16 to 80 with a standard deviation of 11.

¹⁷ MUNIZ, K. M., MARCHETTI, R. Z.: Brand personality dimensions in the Brazilian context. In *Brazilian Administration Review*, 2012, Vol. 9, No. 2, p. 182.

¹⁸ HADDAD, L., HAMZA, K., XARA-BRASIL, D.: Archetypes and brand image: an international comparison. In *Australian Journal of Basic and Applied Sciences*, 2015, Vol. 9, No. 34, p. 28.

¹⁹ MARK, M., PEARSON, C.: *O Herói e oFora da Lei: como construir marcas extraordinárias usando o poder dos arquétipos*. São Paulo : Editora Cultrix, 2012, p. 121.

²⁰ MENGXIA, Z.: Impact of brand personality on PALI: a comparative research between two different brands. In *International Management Review*, 2007, Vol. 3, No. 3, p. 36.

as to brands. The cultural differences result in differences of perception and attitude regarding brands. Therefore it is beneficial to examine the global brands in national contexts. It is clear that perceptions associated with a brand go beyond functional attributes and benefits of a product. Each brand has its own individual character and brand personality can diverse the brand from other brands. Having a favorable and unique brand personality, which creates positive brand equity, is important because it is a basis for competitive advantage and can even generate revenue for a company. To managers and academics it is important to understand how brand personality works. Consumers can relate brands to people, celebrities of important figures which can be easily used by marketers to connect the personality of a brand with the desired person. Especially for sports brands this is very beneficial and they can use for their communication purposes well-known athletes. Furthermore it is also possible to measure the degree of congruence or incongruence between a sporting event personality and a sponsoring brand personality. In investigating congruence effects between sporting events and brands we can also better understand consumer processing of sponsorship stimuli.

However, although brand personality is naturally appealing some facts need to be taken into consideration. First, there are still some questions on how it should be defined and to what extent it differs from brand image. Second, there is no unified or „the right way“ to measure brand personality. While some of researchers use qualitative methods, such as image descriptions, free associations, others use rather quantitative ways to detect the traits of brands. The presented study makes contributions to examining brand personality of the brand Nike in Slovak audience. However, a number of important limitations need to be considered. First, the current research was not specifically designed to evaluate all the factors related to brand personality. Second, the research is not representative because of the sampling method and clearly; the sample may not represent any definable population larger than itself. Non-probability sampling is a good method to use when conducting a pilot study therefore; further research is required to obtain representative results. Thirdly, the generalizability of these results is subject to certain limitations. A number of possible future studies using the same experimental set up would be a contribution to this topic.

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