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A Practical Approach to Creating Brand Personality-based Personas

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Abstract

The importance of this topic is to explore a new practical approach of creating customer personas. A quantitative research methodology based on brand personality theory was adopted. The topic explains the theoretical foundation and specific steps of the personas generation. According to market segmentation theory, the personas creation is based on geography, demography, and consumer psychology. The study creatively uses brand personality theory as the theoretical foundation for personas. This article also introduces the generation process, collection process, and result presentation of the brand personality questionnaire. Finally, this study selected five participants with distinct brand personalities as the customer personas and drew cards to introduce their backgrounds. In further, the study will continue to explore the differential effects of brand personality preferences in terms of customer experience dimensions on first-store.

Keywords: Brand Personality, Persona, Customer Experience, Gen Z, Service Design

Introduction

Persona is a Customer Experience (CX) research tool that facilitates value co-creation. How select and generate personas becomes an essential prerequisite for service design. Researchers have proposed a framework to explore the Customer Experience (CX) of store service in Beijing, China (Xi & Idris, 2021). The steps for personas creation are as follows (Figure 1): (1) Selecting the Gen Z group in Beijing; (2) Choosing consumer personas that represent five distinct brand personalities (sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, ruggedness).

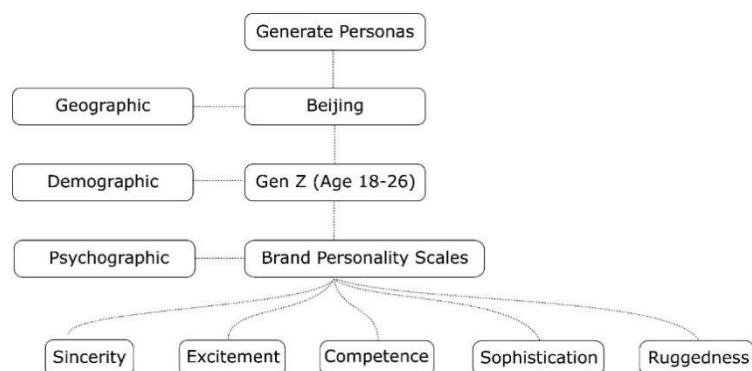


Figure 1: Customer Personas Generate Procedure(Xi & Idris, 2021)

From a service design perspective, value co-creation is a customer-centered theory where customer personas and designers create value. Consumer personas are actively involved in the research and development, design, and delivery of services. Inviting specific participants to create personas is a common approach in service design (Stickdorn et al., 2018). This helps them to apply their knowledge and skills in the consumer domain to create a better CX. According to Stickdorn et al. (2018), it is reasonable to create about 3-7 core personas when creating customer personas. They represent major market segments. Therefore, the creation of five customer personas in this study is within a reasonable range.

Brand Personality Theory for Personas Setting

Aaker (1997) applied the Big Five Personality traits model in psychology to carry out exploratory research on the dimensions of brand personality. In short, brand personality is the human personality characteristic of a brand in consumer cognition. It can be built from five dimensions: sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness. According to Chinese scholars (Huang & Lu, 2003), the dimensional analysis of Chinese local brand personality shows that there is a strong consistency between the Chinese brand personality and brand personality from (Aaker, 1997).

Now, the persona has been studied in advertising (Stern, 1991), consumer culture theory (McCracken, 1989), and branding lexicon (Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010). Persona helps designers understand and complete a consistent user interface from a customer's perspective (Johansson & Messeter, 2005). Many studies (Bryman, 2016) point out that in qualitative research, the purpose of the informant is crucial. In general, the personas represent a group. They have similar consumer psychology, and consumer behavior characteristics in demographic, geographical, and other aspects of the common. However, to avoid creating overly rigid personas, researchers should try to avoid creating personas based on superficial information such as age, gender, or where they live. Researchers should focus on finding some models or rules from the survey data (Stickdorn et al., 2018).

A consumer's personality maintains consistency and stability in different situations for a long time (McCrae & Costa Jr, 2008). Kaur and Anand (2018) indicate a link between consumer personality and consumer behavior. In the current study, no researcher has ever created a persona based on brand personality theory. Building brand personality is compelling because consumers tend to regard the brand as an image, a partner, or a person when they build a relationship with the brand and even project the image of themselves onto the brand (Aaker, 1997). The more consistent a brand's personality is with a consumer's personality or expected personality, the more consumers will prefer the brand. Therefore, setting up personas based on brand personality theory to explore the CX is valid and possible.

Adopting Instrument Based on Brand Personality

The researchers adopted a brand personality test instrument based on the brand personality theory by (Aaker, 1997). The test uses a selection of questions to determine participants' brand personality preferences. The researchers first made sure that the goals of the adopting questionnaire test were consistent with the purposes of the chosen personas. The adopting questionnaire test consisted of seven questions on seven areas: lifestyle, work, transport, culture and entertainment, food and drink, fashion and clothing, and pets. Each question had five options for the answer, and the tester was allowed to select only one of these options as the answer. Each of the five answers corresponded to five types of brand personalities: Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication, and Ruggedness. When a tester selects a solution, a point is added to the brand personality aspect corresponding to the answer. Hence, the tester has a total of seven opportunities to allocate points. The results will be based on the proportion of the test taker's allotted score. The test taker's brand personality profile is calculated by calculating which brand personality the tester scores highest on. The online version of the brand personality test is powered by the Thrive Quiz Builder (Thrive Themes, 2021).

Respondents of the Brand Personality Test

The researcher conducted the test in four classes at Beijing City College, where she teaches. The college is located in Beijing and the age range of students meets the Gen Z requirements. In the end, a total of 123 students from four classes, completed this test. The students' curiosity about the test helped them keep authentic and valid responses. As a teacher, the researcher has a familiar teacher-student or friend relationship with the students. Such familiarity reduces the potential 'observer effect' to a certain extent, making the data generated at the later stages of the personas more credible.

Much of the relevant literature provides valid value information for researchers, confirming that sample sizes for qualitative studies typically range from 1 to 350 (Warren, 2002; Crouch & McKenzie, 2006; Mason, 2010). The researcher collected a sample size of >100 questionnaires for this study. The researcher was required to return more than 100 responses to the personality branding test. In the end, 109 valid responses were obtained from the 120 questionnaires distributed. The personality branding test divided these 109 respondents into five categories.

Setting the Optimal Personas

The questionnaire had a total of 7 points, and the researcher was asked to calculate how much the test taker scored in each of the five personality types (Sincerity, Ruggedness, Excitement, Sophistication, Competence). The list of categories is shown in Table 1 below. The table omitted the respondents' names in the annexes, using a code name spelling out their initials to indicate this to protect the respondents' privacy.

Table 1

Excerpts from the Brand Personality Test results

Respondents With Results	109	Sincerity(7)	Ruggedness(7)	Excitement(7)	Sophistication (7)	Competence(7)
Sincerity (80)						
ZYY		6	0	0	0	1
ZJW		6	1	0	0	0
JHX		5	0	0	1	1
GYH		5	0	2	0	0
LXN		5	1	0	1	0
GX		5	0	1	1	0
HDQ		5	0	1	0	1
GYCH		5	0	1	0	1
YZX		5	0	2	0	0
...						
Ruggedness(13)						
WCH		0	5	0	1	1
ZW		0	4	1	0	2
WB		3	3	0	0	1
PDS		1	3	2	0	1
LBN		2	3	1	0	1
...						
Excitement (19)						
CHM		0	0	4	0	3
LW		3	1	3	0	0
SXR		1	1	3	1	1
LXR		3	1	3	0	0
HQ		1	2	3	0	1
...						
Sophistication(18)						
XC		1	0	0	5	1
WY		1	1	2	3	0
YCY		1	0	2	3	1
XY		3	0	1	3	0
HY		2	0	2	3	0
...						
Competence(20)						
MBCH		0	1	0	1	5
YTY		1	0	1	1	4
ZHR		3	0	1	0	3
LJX		0	0	2	2	3
...						

The percentage of respondents with the five brand personalities was calculated to be 73% Sincerity, 12% Ruggedness, 17% Excitement, 16% Sophistication, and 18% Competence. The data shows that the "Sincerity" type has an exceptionally high percentage of respondents, at 73%, while the "Ruggedness" type has the lowest rate, at 12%, as shown in Figure 2.

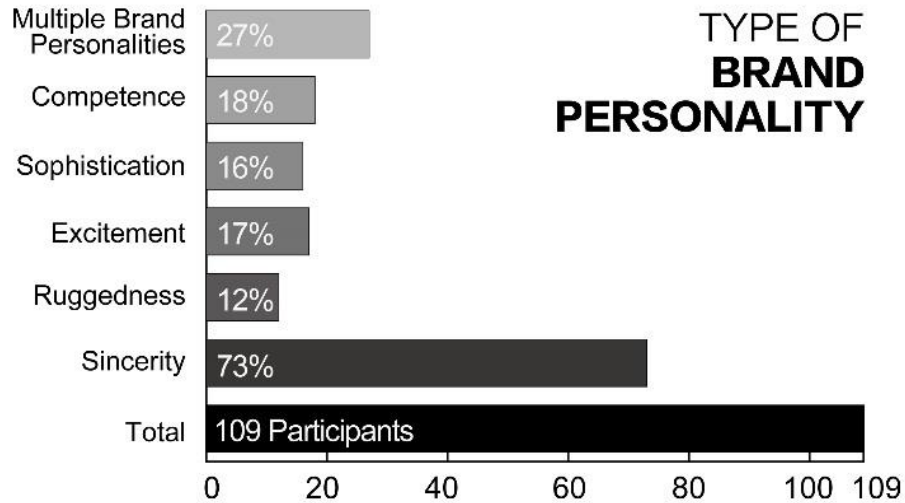


Figure 2: Type of Brand Personality

The most crucial step was to select the most desirable personas from the five categories of respondents. To obtain the most desirable persona prototypes, the researcher focused more on those respondents with high score ratios. This is a progressively narrower approach to selection. In the first step, the researcher focused on the top-scoring respondents in the five groups of brand personality scores. The researcher also looked at the difference between the respondents' highest and second-highest scoring personalities in a second step. The higher the difference figure indicates that the respondent is more in line with their brand personality profile. Please refer to Table 2 for the decreasing difference ranking results.

Table 2

Selection criteria of the five desirable personas

Respondents	Sincerity	Ruggedness	Excitement	Sophistication	Competence	High score minus low score	Selected as Personas
Sincerity 73%							
ZYY	86%	0	0	0	14%	5	√
ZJW	86%	14%	0	0	0	5	
JHX	71%	0	0	14%	14%	4	
GYH	71%	0	29%	0	0	3	
LXN	71%	14%	0	14%	0	4	
GX	71%	0	14%	14%	0	4	
HDQ	71%	0	14%	0	14%	4	
GYCH	71%	0	14%	0	14%	4	
YZX	71%	0	29%	0	0	3	
...							
Ruggedness 12%							
WCH	0	71%	0	14%	14%	4	√
ZW	0	57%	14%	0	2	2	
WB	43%	43%	0	0	14%	0	
PDS	14%	43%	29%	0	14%	1	
LBN	29%	43%	14%	0	14%	1	
...							
Excitement 17%							
CHM	0	0	57%	0	43%	1	√
LW	43%	14%	43%	0	0	0	
SXR	14%	14%	43%	14%	14%	2	
LXR	43%	14%	43%	0	0	0	
HQ	14%	29%	43%	0	14%	1	
...							
Sophistication 16%							
XC	14%	0	0	71%	14%	4	√
WY	14%	14%	29%	43%	0	1	
YCY	14%	0	29%	43%	14%	1	
XY	43%	0	14%	43%	0	0	
HY	29%	0	29%	43%	0	1	
...							

Competence 18%							
MBCH	0	14%	0	14%	71%	4	✓
YTY	14%	0	14%	14%	57%	3	
ZHR	43%	0	14%	0	43%	0	
LJX	0	0	29%	29%	43%	1	
...							

The choice of the desirable personas was based on three criteria: first, the higher the percentage of the respondent's score in the category option. Second, the more significant the difference between the highest and second-highest score obtained by the respondent, and third, the respondent's willingness to become a participant. From a theoretical perspective, the most desirable brand personality persona should be the one with the most distinctive personality traits among its peers. Therefore, the final desirable personas are ZYY, WCH, CHM, XC, and MBCH. ZYY represents the Sincerity personality brand, with a score of 86%. WCH represents the Ruggedness personality brand, with a score of 71%. CHM represents the Excitement personality brand, with a score of 57%. XC represents the Sophistication personality brand, with a score of 71%. MBCH stands for Competence, with a score of 71%.

Background of the Five Personas

To better understand the background of the personas, a pictorial card presentation to each type of persona was assigned. The background of each persona is shown in Figures (3-7).

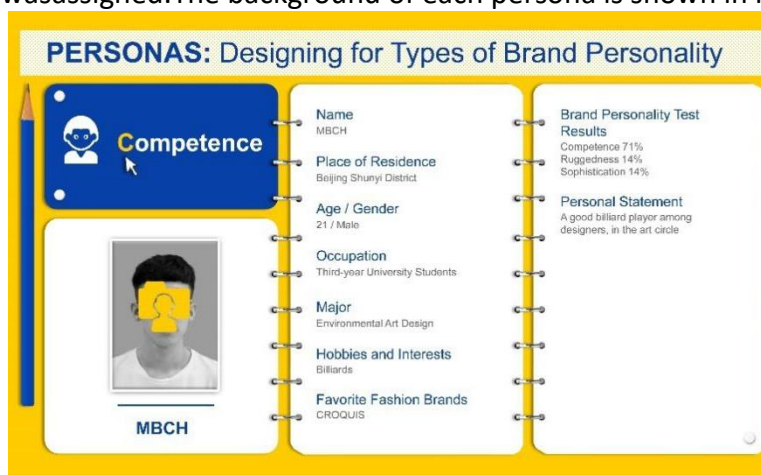


Figure 3: Background of Persona MBCH

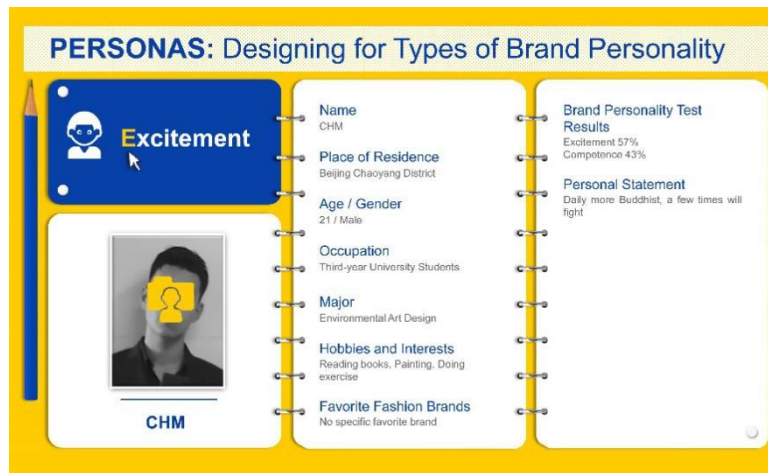


Figure 4: Background of Persona CHM

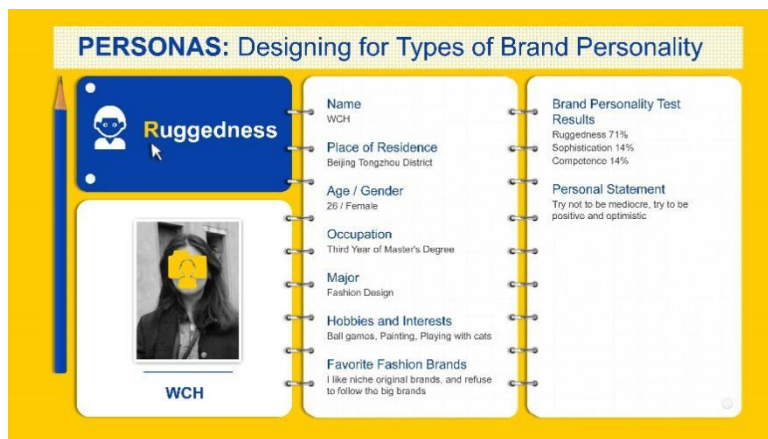


Figure 5: Background of Persona WCH

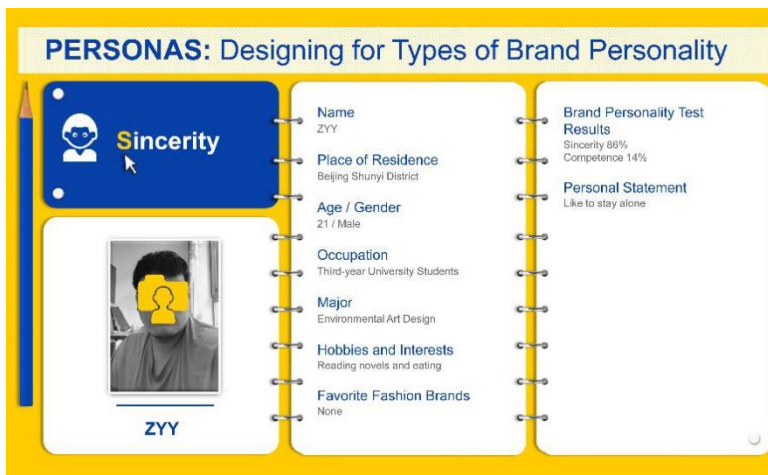


Figure 6: Background of Persona ZYY

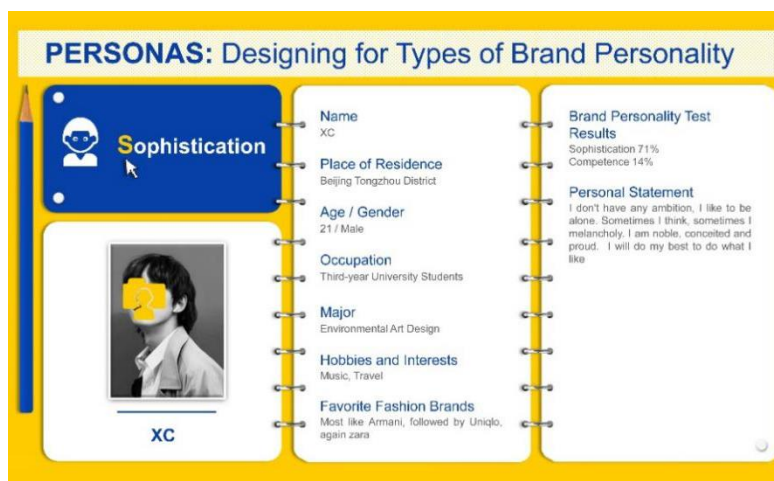


Figure 7: Background of Persona XC

Summary

In summary, this article describes the steps and rationale for personas generation in detail. First, the theoretical basis for persona generation is reiterated, and the feasibility and validity of selecting personas based on brand personality theory are confirmed. Second, the article describes the detailed steps of the personas selection process. This included the use of a brand personality questionnaire test, the way the questionnaire test was collected and the sample size, and the data analysis of the test results. Finally, based on the results of the brand personality test analysis, the background cards of the 5 personas with different brand personality preferences were created. The subsequent steps of the study will explore the differential effects of brand personality preferences in terms of customer experience dimensions implementing persona tools and service design methodologies.

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