Investigating the Nature of Linkage between Personality Traits of Students and Brand Personality of Universities (University of Isfahan's Brand as a Case Study)

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Abstract
Recently building strong brands with distinctive personalities plays a vital role in the success of each organization. Nowadays facing with important role of educational services in societies' improvement makes it crucial for universities apply effective strategies in order to attract students from all around the world. Thus in this paper and for the first time we have tried to study the nature of bond between students' personality traits and the brand personality of universities in order to help university leaders how to build durable brands with unique personalities. To attain this goal this paper conducted the brand of the University of Isfahan as one of the major universities in Iran. In order to examine the main hypothesis Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and Amos graphic have been used. As a result a strong and important relationship between students' personality traits and universities' brand personality has been implied .it was found that university of Isfahan is successful and reliable.
Keywords: Personality Traits, Brand Personality, Big Five, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

Introduction

Recently the concept of brand personality has gain substantial attention in marketing field. Today marketers is understanding that in order to keep up with competitors it is vital spend great time and energy to develop their brands Collins-Dodd & Louviere (1999); Le et al (2012) andto differentiate them from competitors' by certain dissimilar brand personality traits (Le et al., 2012; Parker, 2009). In the other word a well-known brand with distinctive personality can be a vital source to attain competitive advantage.

Every consumer can make relationships with different brands, exactly like the kind of his/her relations with people. It is believed that the personality of each party affects the nature of this (Aaker, 1997; Carlson, 2009). Therefore each company had better strive to make a strong bond with its customers through generating advantageous and unique brand links in their minds (Erdogmus & Büdeyri-Turan, 2012). In Aaker opinion brand personality is "a set of human characteristics associated to a brand" (Lin, 2012). Consumers researchers suggest that brand with strong personalities have numerous advantages. A satisfactory brand personality can growth consumer usage, rise feelings in consumers, increase degree of confidence and loyalty and differentiate company's product better than competitors (Freling and Forbes, 2005). Hence it is obvious that paying enough attention to the concept of brand personality is crucial in attaining perceived goals of every organization.

Today the importance of knowledge in satisfying customers' needs has been increased (Nabizadeh & Gharib, 2012). Actually education is an imperative issue in young countries that are striving to improve standards of living in their societies. Thus it can be said that universities are one of the central places for students of these societies to attain useful knowledge about their preferred fields. Therefore building well-known brands with distinctive personalities for universities is an important factor to attract students from all around the world.

So in this paper and for the first time we aim to study the relationship between personality traits of students and brand personality of universities and in order to attain this goal we choose the brand of the University of Isfahan as one of the mother universities in Iran. Actually in this paper we use the Aaker's brand personality measure to find out if her measurement can be used for studying the brand personality of a university as an organization which presents educational services and its product is intangible.

In developing this paper we will start with a brief review of personality traits and brand personality. After that we will clarify the relationship between personality traits and brand personality. Then we will present our theoretical point of view and propositions and finally we will end up with contributions and conclusions of this research.

Literature Review
Personality Traits
Allport who is known as the initiator of personality concept explained the term, personality as "a real person". According to his definition personality is the dynamic party of psycho physiological systems that generates a person's distinctive pattern of behavior, thoughts, and emotions (Lin, 2012; Allport, 1961).

Traits are described as ''inclinations to adapt consistent manners of perception, affection, and behavior'' (Gharibpoor & Amiri, 2012).

McCrae et al (1986) categorized personality traits into five factors:

1. Extroversion

2. Agreeableness

3. Conscientiousness

4. Neuroticism

5. Openness

The five factors are usuallyknown as the Big Five Model, which currently is used by different researchers (Lin, 2012).

Extraversion judges an individual's amount of interpersonal communication. The higher levels are moreoutgoing, energetic, talkative, hopeful and friendly. Agreeableness weighs an individual's excellence of interpersonal orientation along a continuum from compassion to antagonism in thoughts, feelings, and actions. The higher scorers are likely to be soft-hearted, trusting, supportive, forgiving and frank. Conscientious evaluates one's degree of persistence, and motivation in goal-directed performance. The higher levels of this dimension tend to be organized, reliable, and hard working. Neuroticism weighs an individual tendency to psychological distress, idealistic ideas, unnecessary cravings or urges, and maladaptive coping responses. The higher scorers have a tendency to be anxious, worried and emotional. Openness measures an individual's proactive seeking of experience for its own sake, acceptanceand exploration of the unfamiliar. The higher scorers are expected to be curious, inventive, imaginative, and untraditional (Lin, 2012).

In this paper we aim to use Big Five Model presented by McCrae et al. in 1986 to study the personality traits of the students of the University of Isfahan.

Brand Personality

The concept of brand personality has become an attractive issue in recent years (Kaplan, 2010). Although brands are not alive, in Milewicz and Herbig (1994) opinion they have their own characters. Since brands allow the consumer expresses his/her own self (Belk, 1988), by linking oneself with the personality of each brand (Carlson, 2009)

.consumers may select the products similarto their preferences and dispositions.Therefore if a company likes to beat its competitors it is crucial know how to build its different brand personality, which help customers developa strong relationship with the brand (Lin, 2012).

Aaker (1997) believes that brand personality is "a set of human characteristics associated to a brand." Actually she believes that Brand personality is the act of relating human characteristics or traits to a brand, persuading consumers to think of a brand as if it had person like qualities (Parker, 2009; Aaker, 1997).

Consumers researchers suggest that brand with strong personalities have numerous benefits. A satisfactory brand personality can growth consumer favorite and usage, rise feelings in consumers, increase degree of confidence and loyalty and differentiate company's product better than competitors (Freling and Forbes, 2005). Aaker (1997) used personality psychology to progress a "brand personality scale," She identified the five dimensions of sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness of brand personality, and induced 15 facets and 42 traits.Again in 2007 Aaker and her coworkers conducted another study in Japan and modified previous scale. This new measurement includes these dimensions:

1. Excitement
2. Competence
3. Peacefulness
4. Sincerity
5. Sophistication

Excitement is known as daring, spirited, imaginative, up-to-date and unique. Competence is defined as reliable, hard-working, secure, intelligent, technical and successful. Peacefulness is defined as mildness, calm and naivety. Sincerity is observed as down-to-earth, honest, and wholesome and sophistication is perceived as upper class and charming and good-looking (Carlson, 2009).

In previous papers researchers have applied this scale in different product categories and for various consumer and tangible brands (Carlson, 2009). But in this study we aim to use this measurement for the brand of university which presents intangible product (educational services) to the customers(students). In the other word because of the increasing importance of educational services in different countries universities must try to create distinctive personality traits for their brands in order to convince the students from all around the world that their place is the best one for their educations.

In developing this research we use the brand personality scale presented by Aaker(1997) to find out if this scale can be used for university's brand as an intangible asset.

Relationship between Personality Traits and Brand Personality
There are few researches in which the connection between personality traits and brand personality has been examined but none of them have studied the brand personality of a service-sector organization. In fact in thisstudy for the first time we will examine the relationship between students' personality traits anda university's brand personality as an organization which presents educational services and its product is actually intangible.

Chow et al (2004) organized a study on college students' sports shoes buying behavior in order to find if there is a significant relationship between personality trait and brand personality. Thorough categorizing the brands into the ones preferred by college students and the ones being purchased lately, the research found that the college students with different personality characters shows significant difference in the preference of brand personality (Lin, 2012).

Guo (2003) conducted a paper to explore if there is a substantial association between personality trait and brand personality. The result shows that all five dimensions of the Big Five Model have significant positive relationship with the cognition of brand personality (Guo, 2003).

Lin (2010) found out a meaningful and positive link between extroversion personality trait and excitement brand personality; a positive relationship between agreeableness personality trait and excitement brand personality, sincerity brand personality and competence brand personality (Lin, 2012).

Gharibpoor and Amiri (2012) studied the bond between personality traits and brand personality of virtual web-service brands. The results clarified that there is a positive and strong relationship between these two constructs (Gharibpoor & Amiri, 2012).

Conceptual Model and Hypotheses

As explained above there is a positive bond between personality traits of consumers and brand personality of tangible products. In this paper we will use the Brand Personality Scale of Aaker to examine the nature of relationship between students' personality traits and personality of universities' brands as one of the service sector organizations. Then again we will study the dimensions of Aaker's scale to find out if these dimensions could fit as brand personality traits of a university as an organization offering intangible products. And finally we will clarify that which dimension explains the personality of Isfahan University's brand in greatest form.

In the following we will develop our hypotheses and present the conceptual model of our research.

H1: There is a positive relationship between students' personality traits and personality of universities' brand.
H2: Excitement is a personality trait for universities' brand.
H3: Competence is a personality trait for universities' brand.
H4: Peacefulness is a personality trait for universities' brand.
H5: Sincerity is a personality trait for universities' brand.
H6: Sophistication is a personality trait for universities' brand.
Figure 1 shows the conceptual model.

Tables and Figures
Table-1 Goodness indicates of the structural model

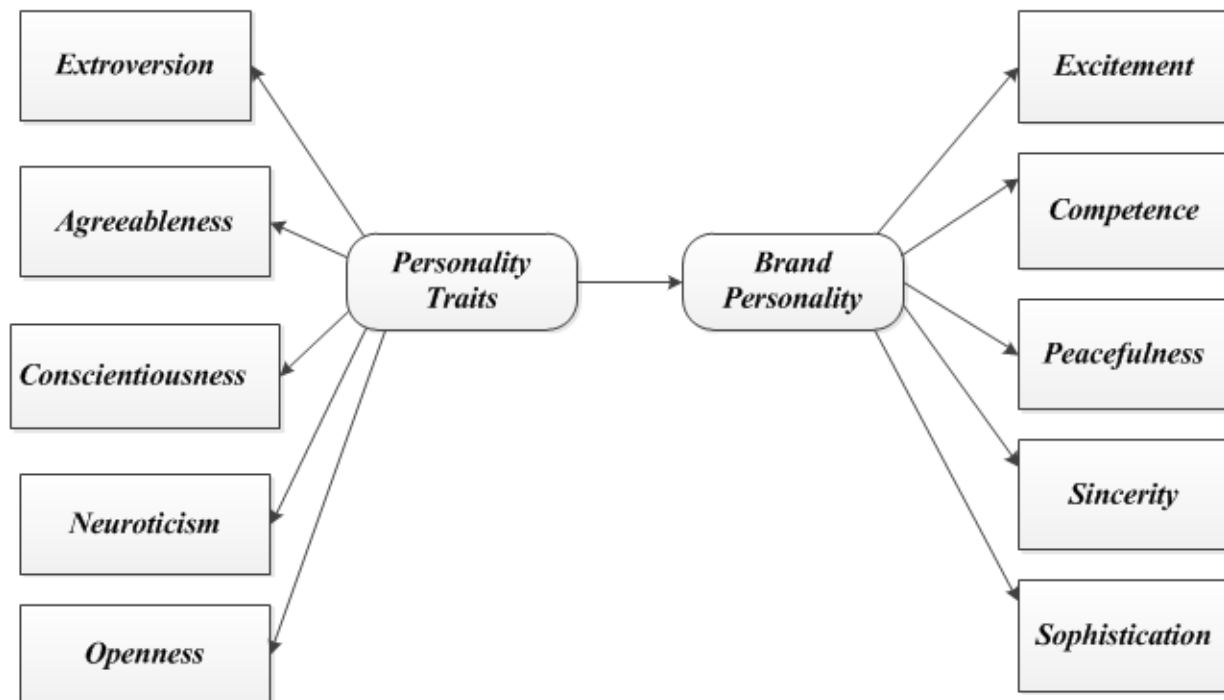| Indicators	CFI	GFI	RMSEA	RMR	TLI	P
Values	0.96	0.957	0.04	0.041	0.961	0.005

Figure-1 The Conceptual Model

Methodology
Sampling
In this paper we aim to study the relationship between personality traits of students and universities'brand personality because in knowledge-based societies training is an important issue for development (Mousavi, 2012). In developing this research we choose master degreesstudents of Isfahan University as our target group to investigate the nature of the relationship between their personality traits and the brand personality of the University of Isfahan and then to find out that from the view of students which brand personality traits of Aaker model can describe the university of Isfahan's brand in the best form.

Total numbers of master degrees students in 1391 were about 4600 students. By using Morgan table, we came to conclusion that 357 students were enough for sample of research. Finally we distributed 370 questionnaires and by 360 questionnaires we could initiate data analysis.

Measurement
Because of the increasing importance of educational services in Iran, universities must strive to create well-known brands with strong personalities and by observing ethics and considering responsible behavior Serban (2012) tryto convince the students that their place is the best one for their education. So, at first we aim to examine the relationship between personality traits of students and the brand personality of University of Isfahan. Then we want to apply the brand personality scale modified by Aacer in 2007 to find out if it could fit for brand personality of universities.

To achieve this goal we applied a questionnaire which included 3 parts: The first part students' demographic data were collected Information like gender, age and the field of study. The second part included questions designed to measure students' personality traits. In developing this part we used Big Five questionnaire which its reliability and validity have proved in many researches[18,] [19]The last part contained questions to measure personality of University of Isfahan's brand. In this part we applied Aakers' brand personality dimensions include excitement, competence, peacefulness, sincerity and sophistication as questions. Most of brand personality researches have showed good reliability and validity of this scale (Fetscherin & Toncar, 2010; Louis & Cindy, 2010). To measure the items of questionnaire a five– point Likert types of measurehas used, from ''strongly disagree'' (1) to ''strongly agree'' (5)

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) test is used to test the factor validity. The results of the CFA test in this study supported the validity of the measurement model. Cronbach's alpha test is used to determine the internal consistency of items. The alpha reliabilities of all variables used in this study are suitable (more than 0.7) and the total alpha was 0.82.

Results and Discussion
Test of Structural Model
 The model fit of the research model in this study was tested using AMOS 18.0. Researchers usually employ different indices to determine model fit. Brown(2006) informed that fit indices are categorized into absolute fit, parsimony fit, and comparative fit. Absolute fit indices assess how well the suggested model reproduces the perceived data (Brown, 2006). The most common fit index is the model chi-square (x2) and the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR). Parsimonious indices and the absolute fit indices are similar to each other except that Parsimonious indices consider the model's complexity. An example is the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) (Brown, 2006). Finally, the comparative fit indices are used to evaluate a model fit relative to an alternative baseline model. Examples of comparative fit indices include the comparative fit index (CFI) and Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) (Brown, 2006). In this study, all the fit indices mentioned above would be used. The objective of conducting the structure model was designed to investigate the relationship between personality trait and brad personality.

The results of testing fitness of structural model fit indicated that, Cmin/d=2.13, CFI= 0.96, RMSEA= 0.04, RMR=0.041, GFI=0.957, TLI= 0.961 and P (value) =0.005. All of the goodness of fit indexes were within acceptable range and indicate that the model of the research has a good fitness. In order to test the hypotheses and casual path, the maximum likelihood method have been used. Table-1

Hypothesis Testing
A positive significant relationship was found between students' personality traits and brand personality of universities. (β=0.812, C.R = 6.38). The main purpose of this study was to investigate this link. As results shows there is congruence between personality traits of students and brand personality of University of Isfahan.

Previous studies confirmed such relationships between personality trait and brand personality too, but for the first time, this research investigated brand personality ofa university as a center presenting intangible products (Educational services) to the consumers (students).

For example Maehle & Shneor (2010) and his colleagues found that consumers choose brands with personalities that are similar to their own (Maehle & Shneor, 2010).

In another study Yi Lin found out a significantly positive relationship between extroversion personality trait and excitement brand personality; a significantly positive relationship between agreeableness personality trait and excitement brand personality, sincerity brand personality and competence brand personality (Lin, 2012).

The results indicate that Excitement is one of the elements of universities brand personality (β=0.753, C.R =4.91) .Therefore, the hypothesis 2 was accepted. This aspect was tested by five facets which are: daring, spirited, imaginative, up-to-date and unique. Their Standardized Regression Weights showed that from the viewpoint of students university of Isfahan is not daring.

The results show that competence is another aspect of universities' brand personality and is also the strongest element of University of Isfahan's brand personality (β=0.853, C.R =7.02).We investigated this dimension by six facets which are: reliable, hard-working, secure, intelligent, technical and successful. The best facet to describe competence of university of Isfahan is successful. Therefore, the hypothesis 3 was supported.

As outcomes indicate, peacefulness is another element of universities' brand personality (β=0.743, C.R =4.57). This dimension was examined with mildness, calm and naivety. As results show students believed that the University of Isfahan is really peaceful. Thus the hypothesis 4 was supported, too.

Hypothesis 5 mentioned that sincerity is an element of universities' brand personality. The results proved this hypothesis (β=0.801, C.R =6.87).This dimension wasinvestigated with down-to-earth, honest, and wholesome.

Results proved the last hypothesis and showed that sophistication is another dimension of brand personality of universities (β=0.727, C.R =4.64).The facets of this dimension were upper class, charming and good-looking. It means that university of Isfahan is really good-looking.

So as presented above the brand personality scale offered by Asker, in a good way can fit with the personality of universities' brands.

It is obvious that from the perspective of students of university of Isfahan is really successful, reliable, and hard-working.

Conclusion
The main purpose of this paper was to investigate the relationship between students' personality traits and brand personality of universities. In developing our paper we chose the university of Isfahan and master of degrees students.

As we know educational services is one of the major and important issues for young population of each country and has a great influence in improving each society. Therefore universities must try to convince students from all around the world that their place is the best educational center. Because of this issue and for the first time we investigated the brand personality of universities in order to help their leaders and headquarters create strong brands with distinctive personalities.

Therefore university leaders had better pay enough attention to this field if they aim to attract students from all around the world. In the other word they can investigate the personality traits

of their target group to find out how they can build a strong brand with characteristics which fit with the personality of target group in the best form.

In spite of advantages and implications, our research has limitations as well. Because of the limitation of time and energy we conduct our research in just one university. Other researchers can apply this measurement in the main universities of their countries in order to find out the most successful ones. In this way they can understand that how the leaders of these popular universities built their brand personalities and then other universities can get pattern from these effective strategies.

As another suggestion it can be mentioned that other authors can investigate the personality traits of professors and the brand personality of universities. By figuring out the nature of this relationship, university headquarters can build strong brands in order to attract the best professors to become their teaching staff.

Lastly we hope that the results of our study can help university leaders create unique brands in order to satisfy their current students and attract new ones from all around the world.

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