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Sebastian Molinillo, Arnold Japutra, Bang Nguyen, Cheng-Hao Steve Chen,

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Responsible brands vs active brands? An examination of brand personality on brand awareness, brand trust, and brand loyalty

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Sebastian Molinillo
University of Málaga, Málaga, Spain
Arnold Japutra
Tarumanagara University, Jakarta, Indonesia
Bang Nguyen
*East China University of Science and Technology,
Shanghai, P.R. China, and*
Cheng-Hao Steve Chen
University of Southampton, Southampton, UK

Abstract

Purpose – There is a rise in interest on the topic of consumer-brand relationships (CBRs) among practitioners and academics. Consumers are said to build relationships with brands that have a personality congruent with their own. The purpose of this paper is to investigate two types of brand personality traits, namely, responsible brands and active brands to predict prominent CBR constructs, including brand awareness, brand trust, and brand loyalty.

Design/methodology/approach – This study was based on an electronic survey of 339 respondents. Structural equation modeling was used to analyze the data.

Findings – The results show that brand personality positively affects the three CBR constructs. Specifically, the focus is shifted to the two major personality dimensions, responsible and active, respectively. The results indicate that an active brand is a stronger predictor of brand awareness compared to a responsible brand. However, a responsible brand is a stronger predictor of brand trust as well as brand loyalty compared to an active brand. Surprisingly, the results display that active brands lower brand trust and brand loyalty.

Practical implications – This finding informs brand managers that projecting active brand personality leads to higher awareness. However, projecting more responsible brand leads to greater trust and loyalty. The study highlights that having one personality may not be sufficient to develop an enduring CBR, but a brand personality must “evolve” and progress as the relationship develops over time. Such dynamic brand personality may provide a more long-lasting brand strategy and a greater source of competitive advantage.

Originality/value – The present study contributes to the marketing literature in three different ways. First, this study adds to the body of knowledge on the relationship between brand personality and CBR constructs using the new measure of BPS. Second, this study assesses the individual level of the new BPS, particularly responsibility and activity, on the three CBR constructs, and in doing so, the study responds to previous studies’ calls to assess the individual capacity of the brand personality dimensions to get consumer preference or loyalty. Third, the study displays which ones of the two dimensions in the new BPS (i.e. responsible and active) may be better predictors to the three CBR constructs.

Keywords Brand loyalty, Brand awareness, Brand personality, Active brand, Brand trust, Responsible brand

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

The study of brand personality has flourished since Aaker (1997) created a brand personality scale (BPS), reflecting the five main dimensions of sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness to capture the personality of brands. Although Aaker’s BPS represents the most prominent operationalization of brand personality (Eisend and Stokburger-Sauer, 2013; Matzler *et al.*, 2016; Freling *et al.*, 2011), her model has been the



subject of several critiques: first, researchers argue that Aaker's scale measures brand identity rather than brand personality (Azoulay and Kapferer, 2003); second, the scale is often viewed as too general and simplistic (Austin *et al.*, 2003; Smith *et al.*, 2006); third, the scale does not include negative factors (Bosnjak *et al.*, 2007); and finally, the scale is non-generalizable and non-replicable cross-culturally (Arora and Stoner, 2009; Geuens *et al.*, 2009). These shortcomings led researchers to construct an alternative to Aaker's BPS. For example, Geuens *et al.* (2009) develop a new measure of brand personality, which includes five other dimensions, namely, responsibility, activity, aggressiveness, simplicity, and emotionality.

Although many studies scrutinize on Aaker's BPS, only limited studies apply Geuens *et al.*'s BPS (e.g. Garsvaite and Caruana, 2014; Goldsmith and Goldsmith, 2012; Gordon *et al.*, 2016; Ha and Janda, 2014; Matzler *et al.*, 2016). More research is needed to test, validate, and establish the BPS dimensions in Geuens *et al.*'s scale. In an attempt to provide further empirical evidence on the validity of this scale, the present study tests the scale in a nomological network that includes Geuens *et al.*'s (2009) BPS scale and three important consumer-brand relationships (CBRs) constructs, namely, brand awareness, brand trust, and brand loyalty (France *et al.*, 2015). Specifically, in light of the shortcomings of Aaker's (1997) scale and the lack of studies in applying Geuens *et al.*'s (2009) BPS, the present study examines two important personality dimensions, namely, responsibility and activity. Responsibility includes three personality traits: down to earth, stable, and responsible while activity refers to three personality characteristics: active, dynamic, and innovative. To the best of our knowledge, no research has investigated the relationships between these two most relevant brand personality dimensions (i.e. responsibility and activity) with the three CBRs constructs (i.e. brand awareness, brand trust, and brand loyalty). Focusing on these two brand personality dimensions is of great interest due to several reasons: nowadays, brands are often focused on portraying an image of being corporate social responsible toward the environment and stakeholders in order to be seen more favorable among their stakeholders (Tran *et al.*, 2015). Other brands are more engaged in being perceived as dynamic and innovative to increase their market presence (Nguyen *et al.*, 2015). In addition, based on previous studies, responsibility and activity are the two most relevant brand personality traits (Clemenz *et al.*, 2012; Gordon *et al.*, 2016); hence, it makes sense to focus on these two dimensions because of their relevance and due to their great impact on the customers.

The present study thus contributes to the marketing literature in three different ways. First, this study adds to the body of knowledge on the relationship between brand personality and CBR constructs using the new measure of BPS (Torres *et al.*, 2015). Second, this study assesses the individual level of the new BPS, particularly responsibility and activity, on the three CBR constructs, and in doing so, the study responds to Keller and Lehmann's (2006) and Geuens *et al.*'s (2009) call to assess the individual capacity of the brand personality dimensions to get consumer preference or loyalty. Third, the study displays which ones of the two dimensions in the new BPS (i.e. responsible and active) may be better predictors to the three CBR constructs. Considered prominent to the marketing landscape (Aaker *et al.*, 2004; Guèvremont and Grohmann, 2013; Swaminathan *et al.*, 2009; Toldos-Romero and Orozco-Gómez, 2015), implications exist for brand managers wanting to use other psychological variables to differentiate their brand personalities and to develop more intimate CBRs.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows: setting the context of study, definitions of the key variables are presented in the theoretical framework and relationships between brand personality and outcomes are hypothesized. This is followed by a visual depiction of the two research models and a presentation of the methodology that was conducted to test and validate the models. Results are then revealed followed by a discussion and conclusion.

2. Conceptual framework

Brand personality

Aaker (1997, p. 347) defines brand personality as “the set of human characteristic associated with brand.” Researchers have established in the marketing literature that brands can have human traits that influence critical outcomes such as purchase likelihood and brand choice (Ha and Janda, 2014; Gordon *et al.*, 2016; Guèvremont and Grohmann, 2013; Swaminathan *et al.*, 2009). Although brand personality is considered as one of the prominent constructs in predicting consumer preferences and choices (e.g. Eisend and Stokburger-Sauer, 2013; Gordon *et al.*, 2016; Guèvremont and Grohmann, 2013; Hultman *et al.*, 2015; Swaminathan *et al.*, 2009), previous research however note that the effects of brand personality on the brand success variables partly depend on the specific dimension (Eisend and Stokburger-Sauer, 2013). For example, out of the brand personality dimensions developed by Aaker (1997), many studies mainly focus on two, namely, sincerity and excitement, respectively (e.g. Aaker *et al.*, 2001; Hosany *et al.*, 2006; Ivens and Valta, 2012; Rojas-Mendez *et al.*, 2004; Sung *et al.*, 2015). Previous studies consider these two dimensions to be the most important since these dimensions appear to capture much of the variance in personality ratings of brands (Aaker, 1997).

Geuens *et al.* (2009) propose five new dimensions of brand personality: responsibility, activity, aggressiveness, simplicity, and emotionality. The new measure proposed by Geuens *et al.* provide higher affinity with the Big Five model than that resulting from Aaker’s BPS (Alpatova and Dall’Olmo Riley, 2011). Moreover, Geuens *et al.*’s scale has been found to be valid and reliable across brands, product categories, and cultures (Matzler *et al.*, 2016) as a parsimonious, comprehensive measure (Goldsmith and Goldsmith, 2012). However, despite its comprehensiveness, limited researchers have applied this new measure of brand personality in their studies.

In this research, we focus on the two most relevant dimensions of Geuens *et al.*’s (2009) scale: responsibility and activity (Clemenz *et al.*, 2012; Gordon *et al.*, 2016), which are somewhat conceptually similar to Aaker’s (1997) BPS main dimensions: sincerity and excitement (for a comparison between the two BPSs, see Table I). Although the dimensions are somewhat conceptually similar (responsibility resembles sincerity and activity resembles excitement), Geuen’s BPS is more related to the Big Five Personalities, thus more novel and different at the item level. Based on a comprehensive literature review, it can be said that there is a lack of research on these dimensions and only few studies have revealed some relationships between the two dimensions and brand outcomes. For example, responsibility and activity are previously shown to be associated with brand personality appeals (Gordon *et al.*, 2016), quality perceptions (Clemenz *et al.*, 2012), and brand engagement (Goldsmith and Goldsmith, 2012).

Table I.
Aaker’s (1997) and
Geuens *et al.*’s (2009)
brand personality
scales

| Author | Dimensions | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Aaker (1997) | Sincerity Down-to-earth Honest Wholesome Cheerful | Excitement Daring Spirited Imaginative Up-to-date | Competence Reliable Intelligent Successful | Sophistication Upper class Charming | Ruggedness Outdoorsy Tough |
| Geuens <i>et al.</i> (2009) | Responsibility Down-to-earth Stable Responsible | Activity Active Dynamic Innovative | Aggressiveness Aggressive Bold | Simplicity Ordinary Simple | Emotionality Romantic Sentimental |

CBR constructs

Brand awareness, brand trust, and brand loyalty are key constructs in CBRs. A review of previous works in this area reveals positive relationships between brand personality and some of these constructs (see Table II).

Brand awareness refers to a consumer's brand recall or brand recognition (Aaker, 1991) and exerts a positive effect on consumer decision making (Hoyer and Brown, 1990; Macdonald and Sharp, 2000), brand image (Esch *et al.*, 2006; Jara and Cliquet, 2012) and brand market outcomes such as sales and market share (Huang and Sarigöllü, 2012).

Despite its relevance, only few researchers investigate the link between brand personality and brand awareness (e.g. Su and Tong, 2015; Valette-Florence *et al.*, 2011). However, related brand personality relationships can be found. For example, Aaker (1996) suggests that brand personality contributes and is a cornerstone of customer-based brand equity (Freling *et al.*, 2011). Pappu *et al.* (2005) incorporate brand personality while measuring brand associations; these authors find that brand awareness is likely to be high when consumers have strong associations for the brand. Subsequently, Valette-Florence *et al.* (2011) empirically confirm that at the aggregate level, brand personality dimensions (agreeability, conscientiousness, sophistication, fallaciousness, and introversion) positively affect brand equity (brand social value, brand knowledge, brand loyalty, and perceived quality) of three types of brands, namely, coffee, athletic shoes, and cars, with recent research exploring this relationship in sportswear brands (Su and Tong, 2015).

Freling and Forbes (2005) empirically show that when respondents are exposed to brand personality dimensions (sincerity, competence, excitement, sophistication, and ruggedness), these respondents express a significantly greater number of brand associations. Moreover, these authors show that these brand personalities help the respondents in recalling the brand name. Another study displays that sincerity directly affect brand awareness of sportswear brands in the USA (Su and Tong, 2015). Eisend and Stokburger-Sauer (2013), in a meta-analysis, reveal that sincerity strongly influences brand success variables such as brand image or brand awareness. Therefore, building on the previous literature, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1a. Responsible brand personality positively affects brand awareness.

H1b. Active brand personality positively affects brand awareness.

Brand trust is defined as the willingness of the average customer to rely on the brand's ability to perform its function (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001). Brand trust positively

| Authors | Relationships of BP with | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|----|----|
| | BA | BT | BL |
| Zentes <i>et al.</i> (2008) | | | X |
| Brakus <i>et al.</i> (2009) | | | X |
| Louis and Lombart (2010) | | X | |
| Sung and Kim (2010) | | X | X |
| Lin (2010) | | | X |
| Valette-Florence <i>et al.</i> (2011) | X | | X |
| Nysveen <i>et al.</i> (2013) | | | X |
| Rampl and Kenning (2014) | | X | |
| Ha and Janda (2014) | | X | |
| Ramaseshan and Stein (2014) | | X | X |
| Su and Tong (2015) | X | | X |

Notes: BP, brand personality; BA, brand awareness; BT, brand trust; BL, brand loyalty

Table II.
Relationships of
brand personality and
CBR constructs

contributes to the brand performance through its influences on brand commitment (Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán, 2001), consumers' spending in individual brands (Luk and Yip, 2008), brand extension acceptance (Reast, 2005), brand attachment (Esch *et al.*, 2006), purchase intentions and positive referrals (Becerra and Badrinarayanan, 2013), and willingness to engage in open innovation projects for that brand (Füller *et al.*, 2008).

The influence of brand personality on brand trust has been largely supported (e.g. Louis and Lombart, 2010; Ramaseshan and Stein, 2014; Rampl and Kenning, 2014). However, most of these studies used Aaker's BPS. For instance, Chen and Phou (2013) show that destination personality predicts destination trust. In their study, destination personality is a multidimensional construct, which includes excitement, sincerity, sophistication, and ruggedness.

Previously, Sung and Kim (2010) empirically show that sincerity and excitement positively predict brand affect and brand trust. Rampl and Kenning (2014) empirically show that sincere personality predicts employer brand trust. A study shows that responsibility and activity have significant relationships with attitudes toward both banking and health screening brand services in Australia (Gordon *et al.*, 2016). Guèvremont and Grohmann (2013) show that flattery from a sincere brand decreases brand attitude and increases disappointment, whereas flattery from exciting brands does not induce negative consequences for the brand. In addition, Eisend and Stokburger-Sauer (2013) find that sincerity and competence positively influence brand attitude. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H2a. Responsible brand personality positively affects brand trust.

H2b. Active brand personality positively affects brand trust.

Brand loyalty is a focal issue in marketing research (Nguyen *et al.*, 2011). Oliver (1999, p. 34) define brand loyalty as a "deeply held commitment to rebuy or repatronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior." According to Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) this definition emphasizes the two different aspects of loyalty described in prior studies: behavioral (i.e. repeated purchases of the brand) and attitudinal (i.e. commitment). Brand loyalty is positively associated with word-of-mouth communications (Gounaris, and Stathakopoulos, 2004), market share and relative price (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001), and firm financial performance (Kim *et al.*, 2003).

Furthermore, the influence of brand personality on brand loyalty has been widely shown (e.g. Brakus *et al.*, 2009; Lin, 2010; Nysveen *et al.*, 2013). A study displays that sincerity and excitement indirectly influence brand loyalty (Sung and Kim, 2010). Additionally, Su and Tong (2015) show that sincerity directly impact brand loyalty. Gordon *et al.* (2016) find that responsibility and activity have significant relationships with behavioral intentions toward services. Toldos-Romero and Orozco-Gómez show that sincerity and excitement are related to purchase intention. In the context of employer brand, Rampl and Kenning (2014) display that sincerity and excitement personalities predict brand affect. Finally, Teimouri *et al.* (2016) show that there are significant relationships between sincerity and excitement on customer loyalty. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H3a. Responsible brand personality positively affects brand loyalty.

H3b. Active brand personality positively affects brand loyalty.

The conceptual framework that guides this research can be seen in Figure 1. In the research model, we set brand personality at the dimensional level. Responsible brand personality and active brand personality directly affect brand awareness, brand trust, and brand loyalty.

3. Method

Data collection

In this research, data were collected from Spanish respondents using an online survey with a snowballing technique. The respondents were asked to recommend other people who would be interested to participate at the end of each survey. At the beginning, the respondents were given a list of brands. In their study, Geuens *et al.* (2009) selected different brands to represent different purchase motivations, such as functional, experiential, and emotional motivations. Several academics were asked to list the brands that represent these three motivations accordingly to the Spanish market. The brands are Apple, Chupa Chups, Coca-Cola, Hacendado, Monster, Nespresso, Nike, Ray-Ban, Red Bull, Seat, Samsung, and Zara. Each respondent was then asked to evaluate a brand which they have used every day or frequently (Huang *et al.*, 2012). We provided a list containing these 12 brands and asked the respondents to choose one brand that they are familiar with. As many as 33.6 percent of the respondents chose Coca-Cola, whereas 18.3 percent of the respondents chose Apple, 11.5 percent of the respondents chose Hacendado, 10.9 percent of the respondents chose Nike, 7.7 percent of the respondents chose Red Bull, 6.8 percent chose Zara, 4.4 percent of them chose Samsung, 3.2 percent of the respondents chose Chupa-Chups and 2.1 percent of the respondents chose Seat.

In total, 347 respondents participated in the survey. After checking for incomplete questionnaires and missing values, eight questionnaires were dropped. Hence, 339 questionnaires were used for the analysis. Most of the respondents were female (54.3 percent). The respondents education background were either undergraduate degree (50.4 percent), postgraduate degree (13.9 percent), A-level or vocational studies (27.7 percent), GCSE (5.3 percent), or elementary school (2.7 percent). In terms of age group, 14.5 percent were 21 years old or below, 36 percent were between the age of 22 and 24 years old, 32.7 percent were between the age of 25 and 34 years old, 7.7 percent were between the age of 35 and 44 years old, and 9.1 percent were 45 years old or above. These respondents worked either as employees (40.7 percent) full-time (28 percent) or part-time (12.7 percent), students (45.7 percent), or self-employed (10.6 percent). The rest (10 percent) were housewife, retired, and unemployed.

Measures

The item measures were developed from existing measurements based on an extensive review of previous studies. All of the measures in this study were measured using seven-point scale anchored by (1) = "strongly disagree" and (7) = "strongly agree."

Brand personality was measured using two dimensions on a second order model adapted from Geuens *et al.* (2009) representing responsible and active traits. Brand awareness was measured using five items adapted from Yoo and Donthu (2001). However, in their study, Yoo and Donthu (2001) consider brand awareness and brand association as a joint dimension. This causes difficulty in extricating the effect of brand awareness from brand association (Huang and Sarigöllü, 2012). We conducted an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to check whether these five items loaded into two factors. The results of the EFA show that

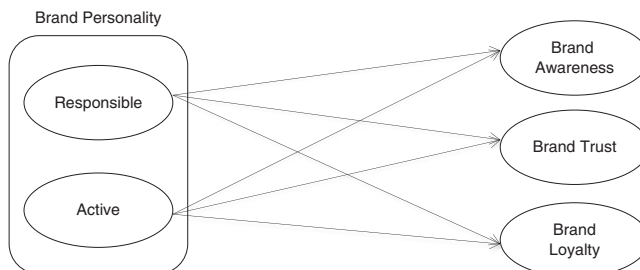


Figure 1.
Research model

these five items loaded into two factors. However, one of the factors consists of only the reversed item ("I have difficulty in imagining this brand in my mind"). After removing the reversed item, the EFA results show that the four items loaded into a single factor.

Brand trust was measured using three items adapted from Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001), whereas brand loyalty was measured using five items adapted from Brakus *et al.* (2009).

4. Findings

Prior to conducting a multivariate analysis, normality tests were conducted. The results suggested that the distribution of the data was normal since the values of the skewness and kurtosis were around the absolute value of -1 and $+1$ (Hair *et al.*, 2010). The measurement and structural models were tested using AMOS 18, employing the Maximum Likelihood method. First, a measurement model was created. The fit statistics for the measurement model was not satisfactory: $\chi^2 = 444.03$, $df = 125$, $\chi^2/df = 3.55$, $GFI = 0.87$, $NFI = 0.89$, $TLI/NNFI = 0.90$, $CFI = 0.92$, $RMSEA = 0.09$, $SRMR = 0.06$. Based on the confirmatory factor analysis, the items with low factor loading and highly correlated were dropped. Thus, one item of brand awareness, two items of brand loyalty, and one trait represents the responsibility dimensions were dropped.

After dropping several items, the measurement model produced good fit: $\chi^2 = 206.74$, $df = 67$, $\chi^2/df = 3.09$, $GFI = 0.92$, $NFI = 0.93$, $TLI/NNFI = 0.94$, $CFI = 0.95$, $RMSEA = 0.08$, $SRMR = 0.05$ (Appendix shows the full list of items). Table III displays the descriptive statistics and correlations.

Convergent validity is achieved since the AVEs are above 0.50 and discriminant validity is achieved since the AVEs are above the squared inter-construct correlation (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Reliability is also achieved since the composite reliability scores are above the threshold of 0.70 (Hair *et al.*, 2010). Next, a structural model was created to test the research hypotheses in a nomological network.

We created a structural model to test the research model. The structural model of produced good fit: $\chi^2 = 267.26$, $df = 70$, $\chi^2/df = 3.82$, $GFI = 0.90$, $NFI = 0.91$, $TLI/NNFI = 0.91$, $CFI = 0.93$, $RMSEA = 0.09$, $SRMR = 0.06$. Table IV displays the results of research model.

As expected, both responsible and active brand personality positively affect brand awareness, supporting *H1a* ($SPC = 0.26$, $t = 2.49$, $p < 0.01$) and *H1b* ($SPC = 0.49$, $t = 4.57$, $p < 0.001$). Apparently, active brand personality has greater impact to brand awareness compared to responsible brand personality. The results support *H2a* ($SPC = 1.45$, $t = 5.24$, $p < 0.001$) and *H3a* ($SPC = 0.91$, $t = 5.64$, $p < 0.001$), which state that responsible brand personality positively affects brand trust and brand loyalty. Interestingly, the results did not support *H2b* ($SPC = -0.67$, $t = -2.79$, $p < 0.01$) and *H3b* ($SPC = -0.24$, $t = -1.75$, $p < 0.05$). The study proposed that an active brand personality positively affects brand trust and brand loyalty, however, the results show that the effects are negative. Figure 2 shows the results of the structural model.

| | Mean | SD | Composite reliability | BP – responsible | BP – active | Brand awareness | Brand trust | Brand loyalty |
|------------------|------|------|-----------------------|------------------|-------------|-----------------|-------------|---------------|
| BP – responsible | 4.59 | 1.49 | 0.75 | <i>0.60</i> | 0.47 | 0.42 | 0.46 | 0.24 |
| BP – active | 5.06 | 1.41 | 0.86 | 0.69 | <i>0.67</i> | 0.48 | 0.33 | 0.30 |
| Brand awareness | 5.80 | 1.30 | 0.89 | 0.65 | 0.69 | <i>0.74</i> | 0.23 | 0.20 |
| Brand trust | 4.11 | 1.54 | 0.86 | 0.68 | 0.57 | 0.48 | <i>0.67</i> | 0.49 |
| Brand loyalty | 4.19 | 1.69 | 0.87 | 0.49 | 0.54 | 0.45 | 0.70 | <i>0.74</i> |

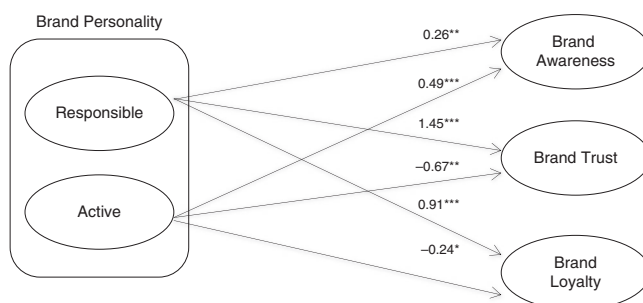
Notes: The diagonal values in italic indicate the average variances extracted (AVE). The scores in the lower diagonal indicate inter-construct correlations (IC). The scores in the upper diagonal indicate squared IC (SIC)

Table III.
Descriptive statistics,
reliabilities,
correlations and
validities

| Relationships | SPC | t-value |
|--|-------|---------|
| <i>H1a</i> Brand personality – responsible → brand awareness | 0.26 | 2.49** |
| <i>H1b</i> Brand personality – active → brand awareness | 0.49 | 4.57*** |
| <i>H2a</i> Brand personality – responsible → brand trust | 1.45 | 5.24*** |
| <i>H2b</i> Brand personality – active → brand trust | -0.67 | -2.79** |
| <i>H3a</i> Brand personality – responsible → brand loyalty | 0.91 | 5.64*** |
| <i>H3b</i> Brand personality – active → brand loyalty | -0.24 | -1.75* |
| Variance explained (R^2) | | |
| Brand awareness | 0.53 | |
| Brand trust | 0.89 | |
| Brand loyalty | 0.51 | |

Notes: SPC, Standardized path coefficient. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

Table IV.
Result of structural
equation analyses for
the research model 2



Notes: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

Figure 2.
Results of the
structural model

5. Discussion

The present study extends Geuens *et al.* (2009) study by testing the new BPS on three CBR constructs. Specifically, the study finds that brand personality predicts three CBR constructs as brand personality explains 56, 58, and 45 percent of the variance in brand awareness, brand trust, and brand loyalty, respectively. The results show that the strongest link is between brand personality and brand trust.

Su and Tong (2015) find that there is no relationship between an exciting personality and brand awareness. Contrastingly, this study displays that being an active brand leads to higher brand awareness. The results show that active brands are more likely to build brand awareness compared to responsible brands. However, in order to build brand trust and brand loyalty, responsible brands are more preferred compared to active brands. These results are in line with Eisend and Stokburger-Sauer's (2013) study, which reveals weak relationships between excitement on brand attitude and brand commitment. They suggest that nowadays, consumers prefer the brands to be more responsible and sincere. As Kotler (2011) argues, there has been a shift in marketing where consumers pay more attention toward social responsibilities and ethical brands. As many brands are balancing a relationship between making money and doing the right thing via corporate social responsibility (e.g. Powell, 2011), the study thus provides important insight into the impact of a brand personality that is responsible, extending the brand personality literature (Geuens *et al.*, 2009) and providing a more focused perspective on the responsibility trait of brands. The study is first to single out this important brand personality trait to investigate its relation to the CBR context.

Interestingly, the results show that being overly active could negatively affect brand trust and brand loyalty. Although the association is not statistically significant, Banerjee (2016) finds that excitement brand personality has a negative association with brand preference. A study also finds that excitement does not predict employer brand trust (Raml and Kenning, 2014). One explanation could be that the brands often are perceived as the opposite of what they are claiming. For example, Guèvremont and Grohmann (2013) argue that when a sincere brand attempts to flatter the consumers, it decreases their brand attitude and increases disappointment. However, this does not occur when flattery comes from exciting brands. This study not only finds important relationships between active brands and brand awareness, trust and loyalty, but also, provides nuanced insight into their specific effects. That is, although active brands are important in creating awareness, they are not a sufficient element to generate trust and loyalty. Hence, the study shows that a brand should not rely on a single brand personality trait, but adopt multiple brand personalities across different stages of the branding process in order to achieve effective and more relatable CBRs.

Based on these results, the present study thus contributes to the marketing literature in three different ways. First, using the new measure of BPS, this study adds to the body of knowledge on the relationship between brand personality and CBR constructs. Second, assessing the individual level of the new BPS, the study examines responsibility and activity on the three CBR constructs, and in doing so, assess the individual capacity of the brand personality dimensions to get consumer preference or loyalty (Keller and Lehmann, 2006; Geuens *et al.*, 2009). Finally, the study provides a nuanced finding of which ones of the two dimensions in the new BPS (i.e. responsible and active) may be better predictors to the three CBR constructs.

Brand managers should be very careful in communicating their brands' personalities. Communicating to the consumers that their brands are responsible as well as active is good. However, brand managers should understand the interplay between these two opposing personalities. Consumers may believe that the brand is a responsible brand but also a little bit active. However, communicating two different opposing personalities at the same time may confuse the consumers. This is due to consumers' disconfirmation of expectations (Guèvremont and Grohmann, 2013). More importantly, having one personality may not be sufficient to develop an enduring CBR, but a brand personality must "evolve" and progress as the relationship develops over time. Such dynamic brand personality may provide a more long-lasting brand strategy and a greater source of competitive advantage.

6. Limitations and future studies

Although this study enlightens the literature of brand management, it is not without its limitations. This study collects data from a cross-sectional study in Spain. In order to generalize the results of this study, future studies should replicate the conceptual framework cross-culturally. Particularly on the negative effects of active personality toward the two CBR constructs.

Furthermore, Spanish has been regarded as individuals with high uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 2001). Uncertainty avoidance increases the reliability of the brand personality dimensions, namely, sincerity and excitement (Eisend and Stokburger-Sauer, 2013). Thus, it would be interesting to know whether differences occur between high and low uncertainty avoidance respondents. A limitation of the CBR variables could be the potential for multicollinearity due to some correlations with brand trust. Future studies should test these CBR variables in other contexts and validate the item measures. In addition, future studies should expand our model with other brand personality traits – both existing, such as aggressiveness, simplicity, and emotionality – and/or other, completely new personality traits. Finally, future studies should also account for other individual differences, such as attachment style (Japutra *et al.*, 2014), as recent studies note that attachment style plays a prominent role in predicting consumer behaviors.

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Further reading

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Appendix

| | SPC | Mean | SD |
|---|------|------|------|
| <i>Brand personality: responsible</i> | | | |
| Down-to-earth | 0.65 | 5.18 | 1.56 |
| Stable | 0.88 | 4.30 | 1.67 |
| <i>Brand personality: active</i> | | | |
| Dynamic | 0.86 | 4.84 | 1.59 |
| Innovative | 0.77 | 5.04 | 1.70 |
| Active | 0.83 | 5.30 | 1.51 |
| <i>Brand awareness</i> | | | |
| I am aware of this brand | 0.78 | 5.43 | 1.47 |
| I can quickly recall the symbol or logo of this brand | 0.89 | 5.69 | 1.38 |
| I can recognize this brand among other competing brands | 0.90 | 6.51 | 1.21 |
| <i>Brand trust</i> | | | |
| I rely on this brand | 0.75 | 4.96 | 1.58 |
| This is an honest brand | 0.83 | 3.89 | 1.89 |
| This brand is safe | 0.87 | 3.89 | 1.71 |
| <i>Brand loyalty</i> | | | |
| I consider myself to be loyal to this brand | 0.79 | 4.17 | 1.85 |
| This brand would be my first choice | 0.95 | 5.26 | 1.66 |
| I will not buy other brands if this brand is available at the store | 0.76 | 4.36 | 1.89 |

Table A1.
Measures

Notes: SPC, Standardized path coefficients. 7-point: 1 = strongly disagree – 7 = strongly agree

About the authors

Sebastian Molinillo is an Associate Professor in Marketing at the University of Malaga. His research interests are brand management, social media and technology adoption. He has published papers at peer reviewed journals such as *Journal of Business Research*, *Tourism and Management Studies*, *Dos Algarves*. He has presented several papers at the annual conferences of the Academy of Marketing, Global Innovation and Knowledge Academy, European Academy of Management and Business Economics, AEMARK, among others.

Arnold Japutra is a Lecturer at the Tarumanagara University. His key research interests are brand management, consumer behavior and relationship marketing in particular in the realm of consumer psychology. He has presented his work at several academic conferences (e.g. European Marketing Academy Conference). He has also published his papers at peer reviewed journal articles, such as *Journal of Business Research*, *Journal of Marketing Communications*, *Journal of Brand Management*, *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, *Asia-Pacific Journal of Business Administration* and *Active Learning in Higher Education*. Arnold Japutra is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: arnold.japutra@gmail.com

Bang Nguyen is an Associate Professor at the East China University of Science and Technology, P.R. China and Editor of the journal, *The Bottom Line*, published by Emerald. His research focuses on customer relationship management and branding. His work has been published at several journals, such as *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *Industrial Marketing Management*, *European Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Business Research*, and *Journal of Marketing Management*, among others.

Cheng-Hao Steve Chen is a Lecturer in Marketing at the Southampton Business School. Previously, he held Faculty positions at the Oxford Brookes University, Middlesex University. His research interests include relationship marketing, consumer behaviour in luxury and capability/performance related studies. Steve has published in *Services Industries Journal*, *Information Technology and Management*, *Journal of Targeting, Measurement and Analysis for Marketing*, *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, and so on.

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