

## 2017 Sport Marketing Association Conference (SMA XV)

### A Factor Analysis of Personality Traits Both Applicable and Relevant to Sport Brands

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**8:00-8:50 AM, Washington Ballroom**

**50-minute poster presentation**

**(including questions)**

Since Aaker's (1997) article, brand personality research has been dominated by Aaker's scale and methodology (Avis, 2012). Brand personality (BP) is defined in Aaker's (1997) influential article as the "set of human characteristics associated with a brand" (p. 347). Aaker (1997) introduces anthropomorphism theory as an explanation for why consumers are likely to attribute human characteristics to non-human entities, such as brands. Through marketing efforts, brand researchers have found that consumers could easily attribute human personality traits to inanimate subjects such as brands. Based on this conceptualization of BP, Aaker (1997) developed a theoretical framework that encompasses five dimensions: Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication, and Ruggedness. Aaker's (1997) study is a seminal and pioneering work assisting researchers and practitioners not only in understanding the symbolic meaning of brands, but also with measuring the symbolic human personality aspects of brands.

However, to date, Aaker's BP model and other BP studies following Aaker's framework have been criticized regarding the inclusion of other characteristics beyond personality in the scale items, such as socio-demographics or non-personality traits (Geuens, Weijters, & De Wulf, 2009). A second critique relates to the non-generalizability of the scale. This critique regards the issue of why the BP framework does not generalize to individual brands within a product or service category (Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003). A third criticism concerns the non-replicability of the BP factor structure (Geuens et al., 2009). All attempts to develop a sport BP measurement have replicated neither Aaker's BP structure nor the human personality factors such as the Big Five dimensions or HEXACO dimensions. A fourth critique indicates the exclusion of negative traits or factors in the scale development. Aaker's (1997) BP concept "focuses on positive aspects of BP associations which are of most interest to marketers, disregarding negative brand-related associations held by consumers" (Bosnjak, Bochmann, & Hufschmidt, 2007, p. 306).

While BP has become an increasingly important concept within sport BP research, there is a lack of conceptual and theoretical foundation that might resolve the existing critiques of the methods in the sport BP research. Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to elaborate upon existing critiques trying to resolve the problems that are identified in the literature on BP in sport. Since sport consumers routinely describe their favorite sport brands using human personality traits, sport BP studies might follow a lexical approach which suggests that personality differences tend to become encoded in human personality traits. Both the Big Five and HEXACO scales are the result of factor analysis based on the lexical approach. The Big Five factors are generally known as (I) Extraversion, (II) Agreeableness, (III) Conscientiousness, (IV) Emotional Stability, and (V) Intellect or Imagination. The HEXACO model produces a separate factor (i.e., Honesty-Humility) from the Big Five model and this human personality dimension may provide better prediction of the Sincerity factor in BP (Aaker, 1997; Ashton & Lee, 2005a).

Unlike the lexical approach of the Big Five or HEXACO, Aaker's (1997) scale includes not only human personality traits but also non-human personality traits, such as small-town, corporate, successful, good looking, western, and glamorous. According to the lexical approach, these non-human personality traits should be excluded because inappropriately selected variables might distort the factor structure (Ashton & Lee, 2005b). However, numerous BP studies in the sport management literature are also based on Aaker's (1997) framework or definition (Braunstein & Ross, 2010; Lee & Cho, 2012; Ross, 2008). As a result, previous studies following the methodological foundation of Aaker's (1997) have also included items that are not properly human personality traits (Avis, 2012). Previous sport BP research has generated different BP models in which there are many variations on dimensions and items (Kang, Bennett, & Welty Peachey, 2016). The lack of consensus may be explained in terms of failing to obtain an exhaustive or representative set of BP traits in sport. Currently, only few BP studies adopted lexical approach and found that their new models have a set of dimensions/framework of BP similar to the Big Five dimensions (Geuens, 2009). The scales were built upon the Big Five human personality structure in psychology (Geuens, 2009). Given the

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important role of the Big Five in BP, the HEXACO model needs to be critically examined because the model may also play an important role in developing a fundamental framework in BP research (Lee & Ashton, 2006). Based on the lexical approach and its application to identifying a BP structure in marketing literature, this study proposes that BP dimensions are similar to the Big-Five or HEXACO structure.

Azoulay and Kapferer (2003) restrict the use of the BP concept and define BP as “the unique set of human personality traits both applicable and relevant to brands” (p. 153). Given its clarity in the conception of BP, the current study adopted the conceptual definition of BP by Azoulay and Kapferer. Drawn from the literature and conceptualization of BP above, the research questions to be examined in the context of the present study are: (a) whether the five-factor space of the Big Five can be recovered from human personality traits both applicable and relevant to sport brands (BP traits), then (b) whether the six-factor structure (now called the ‘HEXACO’ framework) will be discovered from the sport BP traits.

In the first step of obtaining an initial set of human personality traits both applicable and relevant to brands, human personality traits will be identified from previous BP studies in order to obtain an extensive list of personality-related adjectives. According to the lexical approach in personality psychology, this study will exclude all non-human personality traits, such as (a) temporary states, physical states, and activities; (b) social roles, social evaluations, relationships, and effects; and (c) exclusion categories because inappropriately selected variables might distort the factor structure. In the second step, a panel consisting of twelve judges who are active in a sport management profession (either as a sport management professor at a university or as a marketing manager/practitioner in a sport organization) will rate the appropriateness of items in describing sport brands. In order for respondents to describe as many personality dimensions as possible in detail, the brand should be familiar, relevant, and meaningful to the subjects. In addition, some theorists have questioned whether brands are perceived as humanlike entities. Therefore, the researcher will select sport brands perceived by consumers as human brands in sport (e.g., sports teams or David Beckham) or something that at least approximates to living quasi-humanlike entities in sport (e.g., Air Jordan, NIKE LeBron, NIKE Kyrie, Under Armour Curry). Data will be gathered using a web-based survey tool (Qualtrics). Using the online survey tool, data will be collected from an online platform, Mechanical Turk (MTurk). The Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity (BTS) and the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy will be measured in order to check whether the data satisfy the criteria for factor analysis. An exploratory factor analysis will be performed through principal axis factor analysis with varimax rotation in order to generate a factor structure of sport BP that has the most appropriate number of sport BP dimensions.

At the time of this presentation, the study will have been completed. This study expects to contribute the literature by (a) finding a new dimensional framework for sport BP structure; (b) providing crucial theoretical implications by reexamining personality trait theory (i.e., lexical approach) as a theoretical foundation of BP research in sport; and (c) suggesting practical implications derived from the results. Limitations associated with the current study and suggestions for future research will also be provided.

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