Effects of Brand Personality on Brand Trust and Brand Affect

ABSTRACT : **Given the potential utility of brand personality for marketers, the present research conceptualizes and investigates the relationships between five brand personality dimensions and brand trust as well as brand affect. This research proposes that some brand personality dimensions relate more to brand trust, whereas other dimensions relate more to brand affect. The results suggest that Sincerity and Ruggedness brand personality dimensions are more likely to influence the level of brand trust than brand affect, whereas the Excitement and Sophistication dimensions relate more to brand affect than to brand trust. The Competence dimension appears to have similar effects on both brand trust and brand affect. The research findings are consistent with marketing and consumer researchers' assertions that brand personality can increase levels of brand trust and evoke brand affect, which in turn builds the level of brand loyalty. Theoretical and practical contributions and implications are discussed.**

The notion that inanimate objects such as commercial brands can become associated with human characteristics has been given a considerable amount of attention in marketing and consumer psychology. This symbolic meaning brands acquire is often called brand personality, defined as "the set of human characteristics associated with a brand" (Aaker, 1997, p. 347). Marketing researchers and practitioners have suggested the concept of brand personality's importance in the persuasion process; they view brand personality as an efficient way to distinguish a brand from its competitors at the symbolic level (e.g., Biel, 1993; Plummer, 1985). Further, prior literature suggests that consumers often use brands to create, reinforce, and communicate their self-concepts (e.g., Belk, 1988; Escalas & Bettman, 2003; Sirgy, 1982). Brand personality is viewed as a central driver in the establishment of positive attitude and preference for a brand (Biel, 1993), a powerful determinant of brand equity, and an effective means to create and build meaningful consumer–brand relationships (Sung & Tinkham, 2005).

Given the importance of the brand personality construct in marketing and consumer psychology research, a growing number of studies have been conducted to test its application in the field theoretically and practically (e.g., Aaker, 1997; Aaker, Benet-Martinez, & Garolera, 2001; Azoulay & Kapfere, 2003; Caprara, Barbaranelli, & Guido, 2001; O'Cass & Lim, 2002; Siguaw, Mattila, & Austin, 1999; Sung & Tinkham, 2005). Nevertheless,many studies have focused on the structure and measurement scales, and limited research has empirically examined the predictive roles of brand personality in persuasion (with the exception of a few recent studies such as Aaker, 1999; Ang & Lim, 2006; Chang & Chieng, 2006; Lau & Phau, 2007). The present study's objective is to conceptualize and empirically investigate the impact of brand personality on key dependent variables in consumer behavior. More specifically, this research conceptually links two streams of research and investigates the impact of five brand personality dimensions (Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication, and Ruggedness) on two dependent variables: brand trust and brand affect. This research follows and tests Chaudhuri and Holbrook's (2001, 2002) brand affect/brand trust–brand loyalty model by adding Aaker's (1997) five brand personality dimensions.Toward this end, the current study proposes theoretical models including five brand personality dimensions, brand trust, and brand affect. This research builds on and contributes to previous brand personality and consumer psychology literature by examining the determinant roles of brand personality in brand evaluation.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND - Brand Personality

According to brand personality theorists, brands can be associated with human personality traits through learning and experience. Since consumers have difficulty articulating perceived differences between competitive brands based on the physical attributes, brand personality and image management have been a critical part of a company's marketing program. As Levy (1985) noted, the task of differentiating brands can be facilitated when consumers relate them to human characteristics, suggesting that communicating a clearly defined brand image enables consumers to identify the needs the brand satisfies (Park, Jaworski, & MacInnis, 1986). Not every brand has a personality of its own, however. Since the

brand's personality is created and developed by any direct or indirect brand contact that the consumer experiences (Shank & Langmeyer, 1994; Plummer, 1985), it is essential for consumers to experience the brand first before they form any subjective perceptions about and personality characteristics associated with the brand. The effect of such experiences is the creation of a brand with a personality of its own. As Aaker (1996) suggested, the entire mix of marketing communication variables (e.g., advertising, user imagery, price, packaging, symbols, logos, store location, word-of-mouth) and every other exposure that the brand receives creates brand personality over time. A brand's personality is stronger and clearer if these elements are deliberately coordinated, if the personality is distinctive, and if the personality is kept consistent over time and media (Batra, Lehmann, & Singh, 1993).

Brand personality is beneficial to marketers and consumers. For marketers, a brand's personality is an integral component of a brand's image and equity, and it is related to the brand's value in the consumer's mind (Keller, 1993). Brand personality can create and build a bond with the consumer, particularly if the personality is distinctive, robust, desirable, and constant (Lannon, 1993). Marketers thus view a brand personality as an efficient way to distinguish the brand from its competitors, thereby enhancing the marketing effectiveness. From the viewpoint of consumers, brand personality provides self-expressive or symbolic benefits for the consumer (Aaker, 1999). Consumers often use brands to create and communicate their personalities. According to Escalas and Bettman (2003), consumers use brands to meet their needs, forming connections between their self-concepts and brand images (called self–brand connections). Such connections play an important role in creating brand equity and maintaining longterm consumer–brand relationships. Escalas and Bettman (2003) have also suggested that consumers value the psychological benefits of associating with brands because consumers can construct and define their self-concept and present themselves to others in a variety of social contexts. As asserted by Siguaw, Mattila, and Austin (1999), a well-established brand personality is thought to heighten emotional ties with the brand, increase preference and patronage, and augment a sense of trust and loyalty.

Human vs. Brand Personality

Sung and Tinkham (2005) suggested that brand personality and human personality are not completely analogous. In psychology, personality refers to the set of general dispositions to behave in consistent ways in various situations. These general dispositions, which are referred to as "traits," are typically descriptive in nature and not explanatory.Thus, a human's personality traits are inferred from the individual's behavior, physical characteristics, attitudes and beliefs, and demographic characteristics. They are labels that are used by psychologists, and occasionally by laypersons, to describe behavioral dispositions. From this perspective, the brand personality is not consistent with the notion of human personality. For one thing, a brand does not act. Instead, it has certain physical attributes and performs certain functions, and these factors contribute to the brand's personality. Other components of this personality could pertain to the characteristics of the individuals who use the brand and the social or physical situations in which the brand is found. The brand can also have symbolic meaning. For example, it might have prestige value or might identify the user as a member of a certain group. As suggested by Sung and Tinkham (2005), while human personality traits include both implicit (perceived) components and actual (objective) components that are independent of the perceiver's characterization of the individuals who possess them, a brand obviously does not have objective personality traits independent of a consumer's perception of them. That is, consumers form trait inferences from the direct or indirect behaviors undertaken by the brand, thereby forming the basis for their evaluative conceptions of the brand (Aaker & Fournier, 1995).

The Big Five Personality Structure

Over the years, the currently popular five-factor model of human personality has captured the interest of personality psychologists. A number of studies have supported the generalizability of a frequently observed five-factor structure of human personality (i.e., Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness) and have suggested that it is generalizable and not limited to

Americans or English-speaking peoples. For example, John (1990) provided empirical evidence of the universality of the Big Five human personality dimensions and found similar personality structures emerged in the Netherlands, Germany, and various non-European groups (i.e., Chinese, Filipino, and Japanese). When the instrument is translated into a number of different languages, the results show very similar five-factor solutions in German, Spanish, Portuguese, French, Italian, Dutch, Croatian, Russian, Japanese, Korean, Chinese, and Filipino (McCrae & Costa, 1997).

While it seems reasonable to suggest that human personality structure and measurement (e.g., the Big Five) can be applied to assessing the personality of commercial brands, prior research has suggested that whether human personality measurements and trait structure are suitable and replicated when describing commercial brands is questionable (e.g.,Aaker, 1997; Caprara, Barbaranelli,& Guido, 2001). For example, Aaker (1997) demonstrated that a five-factor structure appears to best explain the way American consumers perceive brands across symbolic and utilitarian product categories. Those five dimensions are Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication, and Ruggedness (Aaker, 1997).

Three dimensions (Sincerity, Excitement, and Competence) resemble three human personality dimensions (Agreeableness, Extraversion, and Conscientiousness) that are also present in the extant big-five human personality model, whereas two dimensions (Sophistication and Ruggedness) are not consistent with those of the big-five human personality model. Similarly, Caprara, Barbaranelli, and Guido (2001) found that the five-factor human personality structure is not replicated when describing brands. Their findings show that only the two meta-factors, blends of the five human personality dimensions, are replicated in brand perceptions. The conceptualization of brand and human personality may be similar, but seem to vary in their antecedents as well as in the distinct roles that they serve.

Relationships among Brand Personality, Brand Trust, and Brand Affect

A recent study by Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) explored the relationships among brand trust, brand affect, brand loyalty, and several brand performance outcome variables. They found that brand loyalty derives from greater trust inthe brand reliability as well as from more favorable affects, providing empirical evidence that brands high in consumer trust and affect are linked through both attitudinal and behavioral brand loyalty. In their follow-up study, Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2002) tested their hypotheses on the antecedents of brand trust and brand affect. They extended their previous model and examined some determinant factors of brand commitment that can be the basis for relational exchanges in consumer–brand relationships. Specifically, they concluded that brand commitment is also determined by brand trust and brand affect, which in turn reflect such product-class determinants as perceived differences between brands, hedonic and utilitarian values, and brand-choice risk. Their results suggest that functional brand-choice risk determines brand trust, whereas emotional brand-choice risk determines brand affect. That is, brand trust and brand affect have different antecedents (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2002). As discussed earlier, since brand personality is created and maintained in the mind of the consumer as a reflection of the perception of the brand, it can have a meaningful and significant impact on both brand trust and brand affect. Consumer researchers have reported that brand personality increases emotion and affect levels in consumers (Biel, 1993) as well as trust and loyalty levels (Fournier, 1998). Although both brand trust and brand affect can be driven cognitively as well as affectively, the present study proposes that some brand personality dimensions relate more to cognitive-level brand evaluations, whereas others have a stronger impact on affective-level brand perceptions.

Brand Trust. In the relationship marketing context, trust has been conceptualized as a key factor in the success of relationship marketing efforts (e.g., Morgan & Hunt, 1994). For example, Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh (1987) described trust as a relationship quality feature. Similarly, trust has been viewed as a determinant of the perceptions of service quality (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985), loyalty (Berry, 1983), communications between parties (Mohr & Nevin, 1990), and amount of cooperation (Anderson & Narus, 1990). Morgan and Hunt (1994) called trust a key variable in the exchange network between a company and its various partners because the variables encourage the company to invest in a long-term relationship. At the brand level, Fournier's (1998) brand relationship quality conceptualization is an

explicit analogue to relationship quality concepts in the interpersonal field and implies that the relationships consumers have with brands have qualities similar to those of human relationships. Within Fournier's theoretical framework, the brand is treated as an active, contributing member of a relationship dyad that joins the consumer and the brand. She proposed that all marketing mix activities and brand management decisions can be construed as "behaviors" enacted on the part of the brand (Fournier, 1998). The brand personality concept proves the idea that consumers can have a relationship with a brand as an extension of the brand-as-human metaphor (Aaker, Fournier, & Brasel, 2004; Chang & Chieng, 2006).

Recently, Aaker, Fournier, and Brasel (2004) conducted a longitudinal field experiment to examine the evolution of consumer–brand relationships. Results of the two-month study support the hypothesis that the interactive effects of brand personality and transgression affect the evolving strength of consumer–brand relationships. For instance, brands characterized by sincere personality traits encouraged stronger relationships, similar to close friendships in the interpersonal relationship (Aaker, Fournier, & Brasel, 2004). Furthermore, Aggarwal (2004) reported that a violation of or adherence to norms of relationships influences consumers' brand attitudes and behavior. The results suggest that an action that is in violation of a relationship norm leads to the consumers' poorer evaluation relative to an action that is in conformity with the relationship norm (Aggarwal, 2004). Prior research has offered support for the claim that brand personality (e.g., brands associated with such personality traits as sincere, honest, credible, and reliable) can be a meaningful and significant factor increasing brand trust, which in turn establishes a strong consumer–brand relationship.

Although it has been analyzed from different perspectives in marketing literature, trust has been generally considered as a cognitive component (e.g., Casalo, Flavian, & Guinaliu, 2007). In the present study, brand trust is defined as "the willingness of the average consumer to rely on the ability of the brand to perform its stated function" (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001, p. 82; Morgan & Hunt, 1994, p. 23). Indeed, the notion of "reliance" is crucial to the definition of brand trust, suggesting that there are two key components and characteristics essential to brand trust: trustworthiness and expertise. Trustworthiness refers to the consumer's confidence in the brand providing quality performance in a sincere and honest manner. Expertise is the extent to which a brand is perceived to be skillful and knowledgeable, which comes from experience or training in the product/service category. The literature has usually suggested that trust can be associated with or defined by such beliefs as competence, honesty, and benevolence (Coulter & Coulter, 2002; Doney & Canon, 1997). Consumers' beliefs about the relationship party (i.e., brand) being reliable, consistent, competent, responsible, helpful, fair, and honest are all important factors that increase brand trust (e.g., Altman & Taylor, 1973; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). For example, Casalo, Flavian, and Guinaliu (2007) maintained that competence is a key element in online consumer behavior, as many consumers have a lack of knowledge of the brands and sellers that operate through the Internet.

Given the above conceptualization of brand trust and prior research findings, two dimensions of the brand personality construct appear to be more relevant to brand trust than to brand affect. First, since honesty is the belief that the second party will keep their word, fulfill their promises, and be sincere, sincere brands that are associated with such personality traits as down-to-earth, honest, and sincere are more likely to be trusted by consumers than brands without (or with few) such personality traits. Further, competence is related to consumers' perceptions of a brand's knowledge, expertise, and performance to complete a job and satisfy the consumers' needs (Coulter & Coulter, 2002). Brands with highly competent personality characteristics such as reliable, knowledgeable, confident, and hard-working will be more positively associated with level of brand trust than with brand affect. Although both sincere and competent brand personality characteristics can enhance the level of brand affect through emotional and hedonic brand values, they are more likely to have a strong and powerful impact on brand trust than on brand affect. Thus, the following hypotheses are put forth:

H1: Level of perceived brand sincerity will have a stronger influence on brand trust than on brand affect.
H2: Level of perceived brand competence will have a stronger influence on brand trust than on brand affect.

Brand Affect. Next, this study proposes that some brand personality dimensions may be more closely related to brand affect than to brand trust. Brand affect in this study follows Chaudhuri and Holbrook's (2001) definition: "a brand's potential to elicit a positive emotional response in the average consumer as a result of its use" (p. 82). Literature on the mental representation of social episodes shows that people's mental representations can be mainly formed by the affective characteristics of episode stimuli, rather than by their actual descriptive features (Bower & Forgas, 2001). Zajonc (1980) stated that the affective quality of the original input is the first element to emerge when people try to retrieve an object (such as an episode, person, story, or name) from their memory. Although it is impossible to exclude the actual descriptive (i.e., cognitive) features of memory (as they are the fundamental objects and cues memorized), Bower and Forgas's (2001) and Zajonc's (1980) findings point out that affect can play an important role in consumer brand recall and recognition. Applied to the brand personality concept, these findings imply that the mental brand representation (or brand experience) can be largely influenced by the affective characteristic or personality of the brand and that the affective quality of brand characteristics will play an important role in brand memory retrievals.

This study takes the view that these affective characteristics of a brand can serve as a primary basis of Chaudhuri and Holbrook's (2001) affective side of a "brand's potential." From this speculation, this research proposes that three dimensions of Aaker's (1997) brand personality (i.e., Excitement, Sophistication, and Ruggedness) are more closely associated with the affective aspect of brand characteristics than with the cognitive aspects.

It should be noted that these three dimensions are emotions of object (i.e., brand) rather than that of subject (i.e., consumer). In other words, the affective characteristics found in the brand personality dimensions are not yet the affective state the consumer (i.e., subject) actively feels or has, but they are affectiveresponse– inducing (or –inducible) affective formula within the brand itself (i.e., object). This distinction is important in order to understand the difference between the nature of the affect-inducing brand personality dimensions and brand affect in the model tested in this study, where the former serves as an antecedent to the latter. Several studies have suggested this distinction of emotion. For example, Dahl (1977) has distinguished "it" emotions, which are directed toward others, from "me" emotions, which are feelings of happiness/unhappiness in subjects themselves. Accordingly, two emotional expressions—"it is exciting" and "I am excited"— should be considered differently, as the former should be regarded as it-emotion and the latter as me-emotion.

Some researchers have suggested more detailed subtypes of it-emotion such as vigor/activation (lively, energetic, active, enthusiastic, vigorous, exhilarated) (Izard, 1977; Batra & Ray, 1986), entertaining (lively, amusing, clever) (Aaker & Bruzzone, 1981), and deactivation or sensuousness (tender, gentle, serene) (Wells, Leavitt, & McConville, 1971).

Of the it-emotion categories, the Excitement dimension seems to be related to the interest/expectancy type of emotion suggested by Izard (1977) and Osgood (1966). Following Chaudhuri and Holbrook's (2001) brand affect definition, the current study considers that this dimension has the potential to more likely elicit consumers' emotional responses such as "being excited." Izard defines this emotion as a feeling of being caught up, fascinated, and engaged. Batra and Ray (1986) explain that the key determinant of interest is a perception of novelty, newness, and change. Among those traits of the Excitement dimension, imaginative, unique, and new are included in an emotional dimension called "uniqueness" by Wells, Leavitt, and McConville (1971). Batra and Ray (1986) explain that this uniqueness factor is similar to the interest/interesting category of emotion. In addition, Schlinger's (1979) "entertainment" factor for the commercial-evoked feelings that are induced by pleasurable, enjoyable, and enthusiastic advertisements appears to be related to emotion. Aaker and Bruzzone (1981) also found a similar factor of "entertaining" that includes lively and amusing emotions.

In addition, the Sophistication dimension, which includes such traits as charming and romantic, can be considered to be related to emotion. For example, Harker and Keltner (2001) used "charming" as a trait that describes the positive emotion expressions found in women's college yearbook pictures, which are

connected to their relationship to personality and life outcomes across adulthood. In addition, Berry and Willingham's (1997) finding shows that individuals prone to positive affect are more likely to be in a romantic relationship. Applied to marketing, this finding suggests that consumers might be more emotionally engaged with a brand that has a high sophistication personality level.Furthermore, Ang and Lim (2006) asserted that, compared with utilitarian products, symbolic and hedonic products are more associated with a brand's sophistication and excitement personality, and less associated with the brand's sincerity and competency. In other words, brands that are associated with such brand personality traits as sophistication and excitement will provide an enjoyment and pleasure experience to consumers, which in turn increases brand affect level rather than brand trust. As consumers' evaluations of hedonic products are known as being highly influenced by consumers' emotional and affective responses (Kempf, 1999; Kim & Morris, 2007), the current study therefore proposes that the Excitement and Sophistication dimensions are more related to brand affect than to brand trust.

Finally, the Ruggedness dimension also appears to be related to brand affect, specifically, a feeling of being active and dynamic: A vigor/activation (e.g., lively, active, vigorous, outdoorsy, rugged) type of it-emotion, which is a part of SEVA (Batra & Ray, 1986), which includes surgency (S), elation (E), and vigor/activation (V/A), indicates that the Ruggedness dimension, which includes such traits as outdoorsy,masculine, rugged, and tough, would be closely related to the formation of consumer affect of "intense joy intermixed with feelings of confidence and vigor" (Izard, 1977, p. 272). In the literature, some studies even viewed "vigor" as one of the factors of positive affect (e.g., Stanton et al., 2002; Davis et al., 1988), along with happiness, contentment, caring, and warmheartedness (McCraty et al., 1998). McCraty et al. (1998) measured the vigor factor using five items (excited, energetic, active, vigorous, and lively) to find out how people feel positively about their new health training techniques. In addition, many studies also consider masculinity, one of the indicators of being rugged, as highly related to emotion (e.g., Jakupcak et al., 2003). From these, the current study proposes that Aaker's (1997) three brand personality dimensions, Excitement (e.g., trendy, exciting, imaginative, unique, and upto- date), Sophistication (e.g., upper class, glamorous, charming), and Ruggedness (e.g., outdoorsy, tough, rugged, masculine), are it-emotions or unapprised affects, which reflect a brand's affective assets that consumers will later appraise and which will primarily influence the formation of their me-emotion. Thus, the following three hypotheses are formulated:

- H3: Level of perceived brand excitement will have a stronger influence on brand affect than on brand trust.
- H4: Level of perceived brand sophistication will have a stronger influence on brand affect than on brand trust.
- H5: Level of perceived brand ruggedness will have a stronger influence on brand affect than on brand trust.

METHOD - Brand Selection

The selection of brands with distinct personalities followed a two-step process. First, self-expressive product categories were chosen because different brand personalities exist in these product categories (Aaker, 1999). Self-expressive product categories were identified with 52 participants (70% female, age M_ 21). The participants were given several different social situations and were asked to list all product categories they were likely to buy or use to express themselves during each social situation. A number of product categories were identified. Among them, three product categories (apparel,watch, and perfume) were chosen for the present research because (1) they were the most commonly listed products across different social situations, and (2) they were not genderspecific products. Second, to test the current study's proposed hypotheses, it was essential to ensure that the participants were familiar enough with the brands tested. To identify well-known brands with distinct personalities in each product category, 45 participants (54% female, age M _ 21) were asked to list brand names for three product categories. Before they listed the brand names, they were introduced to the task with the following instructions:

The following questions are about brands of products. Before you begin, we would like you to think about a brand as if it were a person.To illustrate, Pepsi personified tends to be described as young, exciting, and hip, whereas Dr Pepper personified tends to be described as nonconforming, unique, and fun. Previous research has found five dimensions of brand personality: Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication, and Ruggedness. For each of the following product categories, please list brand names you associate with each of the five brand personality dimensions. After this preamble, they were given five personality dimensions for the three product categories and were asked to write down any familiar brand names they associated with each of the dimensions in the apparel, watch, and perfume product categories. This two-step process identified a number of brands in the three product categories. Among them, a set of 30 brands (i.e., two brands for each personality dimension across the three product categories) was selected because (1) they were most commonly listed for each dimension in each product category and (2) they were not gender-specific brands, thus used by both male and female consumers. For example, Diesel and Guess were most frequently listed as exciting apparel brands, whereas Columbia and Timberland were the two most frequently mentioned brands of the Ruggedness dimension for apparel products (see Table 1 for a complete list of brands).

Measures

Aaker's 15 brand personality traits were used to measure personality traits of the 30 brands. Aaker (1997) identified a total of 15 personality traits (out of 42 personality traits) that represent the five brand personality dimensions, Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication, and Ruggedness. Items were measured based on 7-point ratings of agreement (1 _ not at all descriptive, 7 _ extremely descriptive). In addition, brand trust, affect, and loyalty were measured with items used by Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001). Brand trust was measured as a four-item index (e.g., I trust this brand, this is an honest brand) and brand affect was measured by three items (e.g., I feel good when I use this brand, this brand gives me pleasure). In addition, brand loyalty was measured by four items (e.g., I will buy this brand the next time I buy this product, I am committed to this brand). These items were measured based on 7-point ratings of agreement (1 _ strongly disagree, 7 _ strongly agree). All items used in the current study are introduced in Table 2.

Participants and Procedure

To test the proposed hypotheses and models, self-reports were used to measure five brand personality dimensions and three brand constructs. The initial sample consisted of 135 college students enrolled in introductory courses at a large southeastern university. Fifty-three percent of the participants were female, and 47% were male, with a median age of 21. All participants were given extra course credit as an incentive. Although rating a large number of brands has the advantage of increasing the generalizability, it also increases the chance of participant fatigue, which can contribute to response bias (Aaker, 1997). Thus, each participant rated six brands (two brands for each of the three product categories). All participants were asked to rate the extent to which the 42 brand personality traits could describe a specific brand (Aaker, 1997). Then they were asked to rate the brand in terms of brand trust, brand affect, and brand loyalty. They repeated the rating task for the five additional brands in the particular brand group to which they were assigned. Note that they were instructed to skip the rating if they were not familiar with or had no experience with the brands. To control and minimize order bias from maturation or possible primacy or recency effects, the order in which the personality traits were presented for each brand and the order in which the six brands were presented in the questionnaire were systematically rotated. The self-report questionnaire took between 20 to 30 minutes to complete. Six-hundred and forty-six samples were collected using a survey of 135 participants. Note that this final sample size (n _ 646) reflects a reduction from the initial number of participants. That is, from the initial sample (135 participants _ 6 brands _ 810), some responses were eliminated because of incomplete questionnaires or extreme and consistent high or low rating patterns.

RESULTS - Assumption Check

Underlying assumptions for confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) were checked. The fundamental statistical assumption of factor analysis, which examines the existing relatedness between variables, was satisfactory as Kaiser-Meyer- Olkin's measure of sampling adequacy was well over 0.50 (i.e., 0.94), and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity index was significant ($p \_ 0.001$). The normality assumption was considered satisfied as all skewness and kurtosis values associated with each item were within the range of _1.96 (_1.03 _ all skewness values _ 1.15;_1.22 _ all kurtosis values _ 0.23). Since the normality assumption was met, the maximum likelihood estimation method was used for the CFA in the study.

Reliability and Validity

For reliability, Cronbach's alphas were calculated for each latent construct, and all the resulting alpha values were high and sufficient (from 0.83 to 0.95) (Nunnally, 1978; Peterson, 1994). Convergent validity was assessed by determining whether each observed variable's estimated maximum likelihood factor loading on its latent construct was significant (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). The result showed that the convergent validity was achieved, as all factor loadings were significant ($p \_ 0.001$) and within acceptable ranges (from 0.63 to 0.95), as shown in Table 2. Next, discriminant validity analyses of the eight constructs were conducted using the approach suggested by Jöreskog (1971). The test assessed two estimated constructs by constraining the estimated correlation parameter between them to 1.0 and then performing a chi-square difference test on the values obtained for the constrained and unconstrained models.A comparison with a critical chisquare value of 3.84 (df _ 1) assessed the significance of the chi-square statistics. As for the five brand personality dimensions, the results of discriminant validity analyses suggested that chi-square value differences between the constrained and unconstrained correlation models for a total of 10 pair-wise comparisons were larger than 3.84 (at _df _ 1), suggesting that discriminant validity for each of the five brand personality dimensions was achieved. Similarly, the results indicate that the three dependent brand constructs were not perfectly correlated and that discriminant validity was achieved (e.g., chi-square differences ranged from 37.2 to 176).

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

A CFA of the full measurement model with all eight constructs was conducted first. This study used multiple fit indexes to ensure that multiple aspects of model fit could be captured (Hu & Bentler, 1998). The initial results [x2 _ 2938.78, p _ 0.001 (df _ 271, x2/df ratio _ 10.84), NFI _ 0.81, IFI _ 0.82, TLI _ 0.79, CFI _ 0.82, RMSEA _ 0.12, SRMR _ 0.10] yielded inadequate fit and suggested that the proposed measurement model might need respecification. Modification indices (MI) were examined to find theoretically justifiable respecifications (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988; Bagozzi, 1983). After the investigation of MIs, the error term covariances of eleven pairs (ten across constructs, one within construct) of brand personality traits and six pairs (one across constructs, five within construct) of three consumer behavior constructs were freed to estimate. For example, "intelligent" of the Competence dimension and the "upper class" attribute of the Sophistication dimension were freed to estimate. These connections among the error covariances of some brand personality traits were theoretically justifiable and sound due to the interrelatedness of the brand personality dimensions (Sung & Tinkham, 2005). Upon these modifications, goodness-of-fit indices of the full seven-construct measurement model were greatly improved [x2 _ 1667.22, p _ 0.001 (df _ 254, x2/df ratio _ 6.56), NFI _ 0.89, IFI _ 0.91, TLI _ 0.88, CFI _ 0.91, RMSEA _ 0.09, SRMR _ 0.08]. Table 3 shows the construct correlations from the initial CFA and respecified CFA.

Model Estimation

Using the respecified measurement model, the structural equation modeling procedure was performed. The initial result yielded unacceptable model fits [x2 _ 2724.83, p _ 0.001 (df _ 269, x2/df ratio _ 10.13), NFI _ 0.82, IFI _ 0.84, TLI _ 0.80, CFI _ 0.84, RMSEA _ 0.12, SRMR _ 0.19], indicating the necessary respecifications of the model. Examination of the modification indexes (MIs) showed that some

constructs might need covariance estimations specified. Some pairs of constructs with high MIs were the following: Sincerity–Competence (MI _ 101.97), Excitement–Sophistication (MI _ 60.55), and Sophistication– Ruggedness (MI _ 32.03). There were also items that needed to be correlated with other constructs such as "charming" (of Sophistication) and Excitement (MI _ 63.25); "reliable" (of Competence) and Sincerity (MI _ 85.16); and "honest" (of Sincerity) and Competence (MI _ 61.86). The model after these modifications produced somewhat improved fits [x^2 _ 2088.72, p _ 0.001 (df _ 263, x^2/df ratio _ 7.94], NFI _ 0.86, IFI _ 0.88, TLI _ 0.85, CFI _ 0.88, RMSEA _ 0.10, SRMR _ 0.14], but the model fits were still unacceptable. Although the respecification procedure of both the measurement model and the structural equation model improved the model fit considerably, further necessary respecifications might be executed to heighten the model fit up to a satisfactory level.

However, having eleven pairs (i.e., correlations) of error term variables across different constructs, adding three inter-construct correlations, and allowing the correlations of three items with other constructs to be freely estimated did not sufficiently assure the continuation of further respecification. The literature suggests that correlated measurement errors should be used carefully as respecifications because they may take advantage of chance, at a cost of losing one degree of freedom, with a possible loss of interpretability and theoretical meaningfulness (Bagozzi, 1983; Fornell, 1983). Gerbing and Anderson (1984) also showed how the careless use of correlated measurement errors for respecification can obscure a true underlying structure in spite of the improved goodness of fit.

One of the most plausible reasons for many correlated error term variances may be the existence of multicollinearity among constructs in the model. As discussed, Aaker's brand personality dimensions, though they are theoretically distinct and separable, as also assessed by confirmed discriminant validities earlier, may not be perfectly orthogonal (Sung & Tinkham, 2005). Therefore, there might be a high chance of multicollinearity in the model when all five dimensions are used together and simultaneously analyzed. When there is multicollinearity, a model can be theoretically identified but may still not be solvable, as the SEM method would have difficulty in computing separate regression weights for the two paths from the highly correlated variables to the endogenous variable.

This difficulty of model estimation can result in unreasonably large standard errors of the unstandardized regression weights and overestimated covariances of the parameter estimates, which can then sometimes cause negative error variance estimates. Although the SEM method can "handle" the multicollinearity by modeling (adding double-headed arrows) correlation of independents, and the previous discriminant validity analyses were successful for all pairs, having too many correlated error term variables in the model would still be problematic. As shown in Table 3, some constructs were found to be relatively highly correlated (e.g., correlation _ 0.73 between Sophistication and Competence) even if they are distinct constructs according to the discriminant validity analyses. Grewal, Cote, and Baumgartner (2004) asserted that the multicollinearity (e.g., correlation of 0.7 to 0.8) can still exist in spite of the established discriminant validity (i.e., correlation is not one). Accordingly, in order to test the five hypotheses, this study chose a compromise approach and tested two models, one model including the trust-related dimensions (Sincerity and Competence) and the other model with the affectrelated dimensions (Excitement, Sophistication, and Ruggedness), in order to internally compare their strengths in influencing brand trust and affect. Although the full five-personality-dimension modeling was difficult to execute, as discussed, this dichotomous modeling approach provided valuable insights into the comparative strength of relevant (i.e., trust-related or affect-related) personalitydimensions. Model estimations for the hypothesis tests were initially conducted using the pooled data that combined three product categories. After each hypothesis test using the pooled data, further analyses were performed to examine any product category differences in path coefficients. Table 4 shows the standardized path coefficients from the models using a different set of product data: pooled, watch, perfume, and apparel.

Hypothesis Testing
In order to test H1 and H2, the first model included the two trust-related dimensions (Sincerity and Competence). The initial model shows only marginal levels of fit [x^2 _ 1969.54, p _ 0.001 (df _ 129,

x2_df ratio _ 15.27), NFI _ 0.81, IFI _ 0.82, TLI _ 0.79, CFI _ 0.82, RMSEA _ 0.15, SRMR _ 0.18], suggesting the need for additional respecification procedures for a more acceptable model fit. By referencing modification indexes, correlation of error covariances between the error term of the brand loyalty construct and that of an item ("I rely on this brand") in the brand trust construct was freed to be estimated. In addition, correlation of error covariances between the error terms of brand affect and brand trust was also freed to be estimated. These modifications were reserved intact in the subsequent models for testing other hypotheses. Two more respecifications were made to improve the model fit (a correlation was added to the "down-toearth" variable of Sincerity and "successful" of the Competence construct; a correlation was added between the Sincerity construct and "reliable" of the Competence construct). After all modifications, the model fit the data fairly well [x2 _ 1047.65, p _ 0.001 (df _ 125, x2_df ratio _ 8.38), NFI _ 0.90, IFI _ 0.91, TLI _ 0.89, CFI _ 0.91, RMSEA _ 0.10, SRMR _ 0.12]. A simple illustration of the model with path coefficients is shown in Figure 1. The result indicated that the Sincerity dimension showed stronger effects on brand trust than on brand affect, thereby supporting H1. That is, the level of perceived brand Sincerity was more influential on brand trust (path coefficient _ 0.64, p _ 0.001) than on brand affect (path coefficient _ 0.41, p _ 0.001). The significance of difference in path coefficients (between Sincerity → brand affect and Sincerity → brand trust) was analyzed by comparing the chi-square scores between constrained (two path coefficients were fixed to be the same) and unconstrained (two path coefficients were freed to be estimated) models. The significance test demonstrated that the two path coefficients were significantly different (_x2 _ 5.50). This result was also confirmed across the three product categories.

Regarding H2, although the hypothesis was marginally supported (_x2 _ 2.8, significant at p _ 0.10 level) with the pooled data set, the impacts of the Competence dimension on brand trust (path coefficient _ 0.30, p _ 0.001) and brand affect (path coefficient _ 0.29, p _ 0.001) were comparable. Additional product category level analyses revealed that the Competence dimension had a stronger impact on brand trust than on brand affect for the watch product category; however, the effect size was not statistically significant. The analyses also showed that the Competence dimension influenced brand affect more strongly than brand trust for both the perfume and apparel product categories. In sum, the pooled data analysis marginally supported H2, which the product level analyses partially supported.

The second model consisted of the three affect-related dimensions (Excitement, Sophistication, and Ruggedness). Considering the oblique structure of the brand personality dimensions, as discussed, the model fit was satisfactory overall [x2 _ 1208.77, p _ 0.001 (df _ 142, x2_df ratio _ 8.51), NFI _ 0.90, IFI _ 0.90, TLI _ 0.88, CFI _ 0.90, RMSEA _ 0.10, SRMR _ 0.14] after one respecification (a residual covariance was added between Excitement and Sophistication). Figure 2 shows a simple illustration of the model with the standardized coefficients.

As shown in Table 4, the model (with pooled data set) supported H3, suggesting that the Excitement dimension influences brand affect (path coefficient _ 0.20, p_0.001) more strongly (_x2_8.1) than brand trust (path coefficient _0.12, p _ 0.001). Further analyses at product category levels showed that the watch product category conferred a significantly stronger effect of Excitement on brand affect than brand trust, while no significant difference in path coefficient sizes was found for the perfume and apparel product categories. The effect sizes still showed stronger effects of the Excitement dimension on brand affect than on brand trust.

H4 was also supported as the model demonstrated that the Sophistication dimension affected brand affect (path coefficient _ 0.57, p _ 0.001) more strongly (_x2 _ 23.6) than brand trust (path coefficient _ 0.45, p _ 0.001). The subsequent product category level analyses also supported H4, with the exception of a non significant effect size difference for the perfume product category. Finally, the model did not support H5. Contrary to this study's expectation, the path coefficient size of Ruggedness was significantly (_x2 _ 4.2) stronger on brand trust (path coefficient _ 0.27, p _ 0.001) than on brand affect (path coefficient _ 0.15, p _ 0.001). Further analyses at the product category level also showed that the Ruggedness dimension had a stronger influence on brand trust than on brand affect. The effect size difference was significantly different only for the watch product category.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the link between brand personality dimensions, brand trust, and brand affect. The present study's findings provide empirical support for what researchers had suggested previously, but more anecdotally. That is, as Aaker (1997) noted, although consumer researchers (e.g., Biel, 1993; Fournier, 1998; Sirgy, 1982) argued that brand personality can increase brand preference, usage, and levels of brand trust and loyalty, which in turn can evoke emotions, only limited research has tested these assertions empirically. Overall, the results of this study suggest that some brand personality dimensions relate more to brand trust, whereas others have stronger impact on brand affect.

As predicted, brands perceived as having sincere brand personality characteristics are more likely to influence the level of brand trust than brand affect. Despite the Sincerity dimension also showing significant effects on brand affect, the effect sizes were stronger for brand trust, suggesting that consumers' perceptions about a brand's sincere personality characteristics were important antecedents for the level of brand trust (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). What is interesting, however, is that the Competence dimension did not have much stronger effects on brand trust than brand affect. Although the hypothesis was marginally supported, the impacts of the Competence dimension on brand trust and brand affect were comparable. In particular, the results of separate product category level analyses showed that competent brand personality traits appear to have a stronger influence on brand affect than on brand trust for the apparel and perfume product categories. One speculation of such findings is that consumers may relate those products to more affect-level brand perceptions than to cognitive-based evaluation because they are fashion-related products and brands (e.g., J.Crew,Tommy Hilfiger, CK One). Thus, the product type factor might have contributed to the results of somewhat weak and inconsistent effects (across product categories) of the Competence dimension on brand trust and brand affect.

As predicted, the overall findings reveal that both exciting and sophisticated brand personality traits influence brand affect more strongly than brand trust. Although the results of product category level analyses show somewhat inconsistent and statistically insignificant findings, the results still suggest that consumers' perceptions of a brand's excitement and sophistication characteristics can positively and significantly influence and contribute to the level of brand affect more strongly than to the level of brand trust. The level of perceived ruggedness of a brand was significantly influential on brand trust, but not on brand affect, suggesting that rugged brand personality characteristics (e.g., tough, rugged, masculine, outdoorsy) may not elicit a positive emotional response in the average consumer. One explanation could be that consumers might not develop considerable levels of emotional ties with brands having rugged personality traits. Although this research used three self-expressive product categories (i.e., watch, apparel, perfume), the brands selected and tested for the ruggedness dimension were primarily utilitarian products with tangible, objective features that offer functional benefits (e.g., Swiss Army watch, Timberland, and Columbia apparel). Participants may perceive such rugged brands as being more functional and utilitarian, which might help them to perform their activities in particular situations. For example, they might want to use the rugged brands (e.g., Timberland) in rugged situations (e.g., mountain biking, hiking), hoping that the brand functions as it is supposed to rather than having emotional feelings toward it.

The findings of this research are consistent with consumer behavior researchers' assertions that brand personality can increase levels of brand trust and evoke brand emotions, which, in turn, can build the level of brand loyalty. This research positioned the brand personality construct in a more comprehensive predictive model that included key dependent variables related to brand attitude and brand evaluation. From a theoretical perspective, the resultsextended theories regarding the determinant roles of brand personality by showing that some brand personality aspects influenced consumers' perceptions of a brand's functional/cognitive-related aspects, whereas other dimensions of the brand personality affected how consumers feel about the brand, which, in turn, built the level of brand loyalty. This research expands the current understanding of the construct of brand personality as an outcome of advertising and

marketing communications/activities to its impact on important performance measures such as brand trust, brand affect, and brand loyalty.

From a managerial perspective, the results of the current research provide evidence that brand personality traits, which advertisers and marketing communicators can create and market, can be used as a central driver in enhancing persuasion and increasing brand trust and affect. A variety of marketing activities such as advertising, packaging, price, user imagery, symbols, public relations efforts, and celebrity endorsers can create and maintain a brand's personality (Aaker, 1997). By developing advertising and marketing communication activities and programs that are consistent with the intended personality traits at dimensional levels, advertisers and marketers may increase both the brand trust and then affect for their brands, thereby enhancing brand equity.

Future Research

As this study focused on the consequences of brand personality, additional empirical inquiry emphasizing the brand personality's determinant role in establishing consumer–brand relationships is recommended. Consumers often think of brands as having human characteristics and personalities. They may interact with brands in ways that parallel interpersonal relationships, and the norms that govern their social relationships may guide their interactions (Aggarwal, 2004; Fournier, 1998). Though one may say that consumers' relationships with brands certainly differ in some ways from their relationships with humans, still, it would be reasonable to suggest that consumers interact with brands as if they were human partners, and the relationships they form and maintain with brands have qualities similar to those of human relationships. Further empirical research is needed to understand the links between brand and consumer personalities and identification of the various consumer–brand relationship types that may affect consumer–brand relationship bonds (Aaker, Fournier, & Brasel, 2004).

The present research also points to the need for empirical inquiry dedicated explicitly to the role of advertising in conveying symbolic meaning and the meaning that is attached to different consumer products. The identification of the brand personality's antecedents, which have received significant attention but limited empirical testing (Aaker, 1997), would provide both theoretical and practical implications for advertising scholars and practitioners. Another reasonable suggestion is that over time the entire mix of marketing communication variables and every other exposure that the brand receives creates a brand personality (Shank & Langmeyer, 1994). Advertising, along with other forms of marketing communications, is an undeniable force in creating brand personality and image. Through advertising, brands become associated with certain types of users, or certain types of situations, and consequently acquire personality traits. These personality traits may make the brand more or less attractive to a person who has certain personality dispositions or values. As Ogilvy declared (1983) several decades ago, "Every advertisement must be considered as a contribution to the complex symbol which is the brand image—as part of the long-term investment in the reputation of the brand." Thus, every element of advertising can contribute to the creation and maintenance of the brand personality.

Those elements include verbal elements (e.g., text copy, tone), nonverbal elements (illustrations, typography, colors, layout, music, graphic quality, and endorsers), and the medium in which the ad is placed (Batra, Lehmann, & Singh, 1993). Despite increased attention to the concept of brand personality in advertising theory and practice, little research has been conducted to understand the extent to which the several advertising element variables independently and interdependently influence creating and maintaining the personality of the brand. For example, how do different levels or types of each of these advertising elements contribute to the creation or reinforcement of a brand personality's particular dimension (or trait)? Future research can manipulate these variables systematically and measure their impact on a brand's personality. Finally, although college students consume a variety of self-expressive products conveying different brand personalities, the convenience sample of college students employed in this study limits the generalizability of the findings. Thus, future research is certainly needed to replicate this study with diverse samples covering other age groups to increase external validity.