

Rugged & Exciting: Examining the Personality of a Mixed Martial Arts Brand

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was two-fold: (a) to identify the brand personality associated with a mixed martial arts (MMA) brand, and (b) compare perceived brand personality dimensions among different consumer groups. There is a paucity of literature that assesses brand personality and MMA. This study was the first to apply the five dimensions of brand personality presented by Aaker (1997) to the Ultimate Fighting Championships brand. In order to compare brand personalities based on involvement, there must be an understanding of involvement and its concepts as well as the history of the sport. Three hypotheses regarding high and low involved consumers and their perceived brand personalities are presented and tested. Results revealed Ruggedness and Excitement as the two highest rated dimensions of brand personality. In addition, ANOVA results revealed fans and non-fans differed significantly across all five dimensions of brand personality.

Brand Personality

One way marketers measure what a brand represents is through identifying a brand's personality. Brand personality is taking a set of human characteristics and applying them to a brand (Aaker, 1997). The personality traits associated with a brand are similar to those associated with a person (Aaker, 1997). A company can increase the appeal of brand by assigning inanimate objects a personality (Thomas & Sekar, 2008). As Aaker (1999), and many other scholars, have attempted to propose, a brand "can be associated with personality traits that provide self-expressive or symbolic benefits for the consumer" (p. 45). This is very similar to Milligan's (2009) suggestion that brands fulfill social needs. In other words, consumers of a sport's team may feel inclined to take on the traits associated with that team. Aaker's (1997) model yielded five dimensions of brand personality: sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness.

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to identify the brand personality associated with MMA among different stakeholder groups. To accomplish this, volunteers responded to a questionnaire assessing the brand personality of the Ultimate Fighting Championship. The questionnaire was comprised of three parts. The first part contained questions relating to the level of involvement with MMA. The second part of the questionnaire contained 42 questions relating to the five dimensions of brand personality presented by Aaker (1997). The third part of the questionnaire was demographic questions (i.e. gender, age, etc.).

Results

To test our first hypothesis (H1 – our dichotomized groups will rate brand personality differently across all dimensions) the results revealed differences between groups on Sincerity ($F = 73.080$, $df = 1$, $p \leq .05$), Excitement ($F = 47.500$, $df = 1$, $p \leq .05$), Competence ($F = 46.562$, $df = 1$, $p \leq .05$), Sophistication ($F = 24.371$, $df = 1$, $p \leq .05$), and Ruggedness ($F = 11.810$, $df = 1$, $p \leq .05$).

To test our next two hypotheses (H2 – High involved fans will rate the brand personality of the UFC higher than the scale's mean across all personality dimensions; and H3 – low involved fans will rate the brand personality of the UFC lower than the scale's mean across all personality dimensions), we conducted t-tests. Results partially support H2 by showing significant differences between the mean scores among the low involvement group and the scale's mean score of 3 for all brand personality dimensions except excitement ($t = 1.177$, $df = 106$, $p = .242$). In other words, the low involvement group rated all brand personality dimensions lower than average, except excitement. The results also partially supported H3 by showing significant differences between the mean scores among the high involvement group and the scale's mean score of 3 for all brand personality dimensions except sophistication ($t = -.116$, $df = 27$, $p = .908$). In other words, the high involvement group rated all brand personality dimensions higher than average, except sophistication. Furthermore, H3 proposed that all dimensions would be rated lower than the scale's mean score, however, ruggedness was rated above the mean score of 3 ($t = 2.390$, $df = 103$, $p \leq .05$).

Brand Personality Dimensions & Facets				
Sincerity	Excitement	Competence	Sophistication	Ruggedness
Down-to-Earth	Daring	Reliable	Upper Class	Outdoorsy
Honest	Spirited	Intelligent	Charming	Tough
Wholesome	Imaginative	Successful		
Cheerful	Up-to-Date			

Overall Results Brand Personality (N=132)				
Sincerity M = 2.49	Excitement M = 3.36	Competence M = 3.10	Sophistication M = 2.16	Ruggedness M = 3.36
Down-to-Earth 2.24	Daring 3.62	Reliable 3.12	Upper Class 2.30	Outdoorsy 2.97
Honest 3.01	Spirited 3.37	Intelligent 2.89	Charming 2.02	Tough 3.93
Wholesome 2.78	Imaginative 3.00	Successful 3.30		
Cheerful 2.04	Up-to-Date 3.31			



Table 1
ANOVA Across All Brand Personality Dimensions
Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable	F	df	p	Effect Size
Sincerity	73.080a	1	.000	.360
Excitement	47.500b	1	.000	.268
Competence	63.727c	1	.000	.329
Sophistication	41.658d	1	.000	.243
Ruggedness	19.296e	1	.000	.129

a. Adjusted R Squared = .355

b. Adjusted R Squared = .262

c. Adjusted R Squared = .324

d. Adjusted R Squared = .237

e. Adjusted R Squared = .123

Table 2
Comparing Low Involvement Group to the Scale's Mean

	One-Sample Test		
	Test Value = 3		
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Sincerity	-10.897	106	.000
Excitement	1.177	106	.242
Competence	-2.204	105	.030
Sophistication	-14.356	104	.000
Ruggedness	2.390	103	.019

Table 3
Comparing High Involvement Group to the Scale's Mean

	One-Sample Test		
	Test Value = 3		
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Sincerity	5.105	28	.000
Excitement	15.388	28	.000
Competence	13.647	27	.000
Sophistication	-.116	27	.908
Ruggedness	12.504	27	.000