

Personality Congruence Effect in Marketing Communication:
Theory and Implication

Zhefan Chen

A Thesis in the
John Molson School of Business

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Science in Administration at
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

August 2015
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CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY
School of Graduate Studies

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By:

Zhefan Chen

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Personality Congruence Effect in Marketing Communication:
Theory and Implication

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Signed by the final Examining Committee:

_____ Chair

Thomas Walker

_____ Examiner

Tieshan Li

_____ Examiner

Mrugank V. Thakor

_____ Supervisor

Bianca Grohmann

Approved by _____

Chair of Department or Graduate Program Director

_____ 2015

Dean of Faculty

ABSTRACT

Personality Congruence Effect in Marketing Communication: Theory and Implication

Zhefan Chen

The research examines whether the congruence of various forms of personality – consumer personality, brand personality and media personality – will increase consumers' positive attitude towards a brand in the context of marketing communications (e.g., advertisement). The article uses the SEM approach to introduce an overall model, which reveals and explains the mechanism of how various types of personality can form a synergy and therefore determine consumers' attitudes towards a brand. The results have clear economic significance and suggest that brand managers should view brand personality in a more comprehensive way and increase the congruence of various types of personality in brands' advertisement campaigns.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Bianca Grohmann, whose expertise, understanding, and patience, added considerably to my graduate experience. I appreciate her vast knowledge and skill in many areas (e.g., branding, modeling, scale development), and her assistance in writing reports (i.e., grant proposals, UHREC and this thesis). I would like to thank the other members of my committee, for the assistance they provided at all levels of the research project.

I must also acknowledge Cameron Marsden and Greg Horn from Qualtrics Inc. for their suggestions and provision of the online survey used in this study.

I would also like to thank my family for the support they provided me through my entire life and in particular, I must acknowledge my mother and father, without whose love, encouragement and editing assistance, I would not have finished this thesis.

In conclusion, I recognize that this research would not have been possible without the financial assistance of the Department of Marketing at the Concordia University and express my gratitude to it.

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INTRODUCTION

Brand personality research has received increasing attention in recent years. Successful cases in practical area, such as Nike, Coca cola and Apple, have driven an explosion of personality research in business area. Brand personality is nothing new, but its emphasis has changed from identifying sub-dimensions to establishing inter-relationships across different research area.

The concept of brand personality was first borrowed from psychology, and then developed by market researchers. So it is meaningful to view it through a psychological lens. In addition, recent research has developed taxonomy for both consumers and media based on a personality profile. This article will focus on the following research questions: 1) In marketing communication activities, is brand personality always accurately delivered to their consumers? 2) What is the effect of a congruent “perceived brand personality” - “consumer’s personality” on consumer behavior? 3) Does media personality also play a role in this context?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Consumer Personality

Human personality has been studied thoroughly over the last few decades. The structure and content of personality has been defined. Generally, researchers agree that there are five robust factors of personality (described below) which can serve as a meaningful taxonomy for classifying personality attributes (Digman, 1990).

The emergence of the five-factor model has important implications for psychology as well

as other related field. It illustrates that personality consists of five relatively independent dimensions. The availability of such an orderly classification scheme is essential for the communication and accumulation of empirical findings (Barrick and Mount, 1991). For purposes of this study, we adopted names and definitions similar to those used by Rita (2000): OCEAN or Openness to experience, Conscientiousness, Extroversion, Agreeableness and Neuroticism.

It should be pointed out that some researchers hold different opinions about the five-factor model, particularly the interpretation of these dimensions (Briggs, 1989; John, 1989; Livneh and Livneh, 1989; Waller and Ben-Porath, 1987). Some researchers suggest that more than five dimensions are needed to capture the domain of personality; some researchers use different names in their interpretation of these dimensions. For example, Hogan (1986) advocates six dimensions (Sociability, Ambition, Adjustment, Likability, Prudence, and Intellectance); Digman (1990) uses Emotion Stability to replace Neuroticism; Openness to Experience is also frequently interpreted as Intellect or Intellectence (Borgatta, 1964; Digman and Takemoto-Chock, 1981; Hogan, 1983; John, 1989; Peabody and Goldberg, 1989).

Despite of these differences, to some extent, the views of many personality psychologists have converged regarding the structure of human personality. Nowadays, it is most generally accepted that the Big Five model (OCEAN) can best represent the nature of human personality.

Brand Personality

Two inter-related streams of research define brand personality in both analogical study from psychology field based on personality models and those based on five-dimension model developed by Aaker (1997).

Research of brand personality was very different before and after 1997. Prior to 1997, it was dominated by a focus on generalizing human personality to brand research. Researchers have focused on how the personality of a brand enables a consumer to express his or her own self (Belk, 1988), an ideal self (Malhotra, 1988), or specific dimensions of the self (Kleine, Kleine and Kernan, 1993) through the use of a brand. However, is brand personality really similar to human personality? Does it have a framework or set of dimensions similar to or different from the human personality models, such as “Big Five”? As a result, an understanding of how and when brand personality relates to a consumer’s personality and thus influences consumer preference has remained elusive (Sirgy, 1982).

The bottom line is that although human and brand personality traits might share a similar conceptualization (Enstein, 1977) they differ in terms of how they are formed. Perceptions of human personality traits are inferred on the basis of an individual’s behavior, physical characteristics, attitudes and beliefs, and demographic characteristics (Park, 1986). In contrast, perception of brand personality traits can be formed and influenced by any direct or indirect contact between consumer and a brand (Plummer, 1985). Hence, models from human personality should be applied to brand research with caution. Additional research is needed to verify the external validity of human personality models to see whether they fit “brand” context well. However, there have been few such studies before 1997.

The second stream of research focuses on the profound work by Aaker (1997).

Since Aaker’s (1997) milestone works in conceptualizing brand personality in 1997, it is widely accepted that brand personality consists of five dimensions: Sincerity, Excitement,

Competence, Sophistication and Ruggedness (Aaker, 1997). In terms of practical applications, the scale developed by Aaker (1997) can be used to compare personalities of brands within and across product categories.

A major limitation of Aaker's (1997) five-dimension model is that it does not necessarily replicate in different situations.. Some of the researchers argue that the structure of brand personality is unstable and can be even further divided. Results from from exploratory factor analysis (EFA) showed that the five-factor structure is not replicated when describing brands. Rather, at a higher level of abstraction in the hierarchical organization of brand personality characteristics, result supported a two-trait solution (Caprara et al., 2001). But regardless of the conceptual structure, the components (i.e., variables) remain the same, showing good external validity.

Another replication problem may be attributed to the unit of analysis. Researchers are encouraged to utilize the framework in situations in which they are likely to have success (i.e., aggregating data across diverse product categories) and to proceed with extreme caution when using it in contexts in which they are likely to encounter difficulties (i.e., measuring the personality of individual brands or when aggregating data within a specific product category; Siguaw et al., 2003).

Follow-up researchers also challenged Aaker's (1997) model with respect to its construct validity. Brand personality is a key facet of a brand identity. However, the current scales of brand personality do not in fact measure brand personality, but merge a number of dimension of brand identity —personality being only one of them— which need to be kept separate both on

theoretical grounds and for practical use. Some problematic items in the scale comprise items such as “competence”, “feminine”, the items related to social class and other concepts referred to the values system pertaining to the brand (Azoulay et al. 2003).

Finally, in the original work, Aaker (1997) did not take cultural differences into account. Hence, whether the model can be generalized across different countries remains elusive. Follow-up research replicated the study in diversified culture setting, such as Japan and Spain (Aaker et al., 2001), US and Korea (Sung et al., 2005). In general, the model is replicable, despite of the fact that the components sometimes are slightly different from the original model.

Media Personality

Media personality research always has been concerned with the correlation between consumers’ personality and media use. Because of the difficulty of identifying personality for different media types, research mainly examines relationships between the major components of what personality researchers call the “Big Five” model and communication activities (Finn, 1997).

As a result, the objective was studying how personality traits influence media usage rather than identifying the personality traits of the media itself.

Although a personality-preference approach dominated the related field of study, there were some significant attempts at taking more of a specific perspective that anticipated the subsequent focus on media personality. Whereas the personality-preference approach viewed personality traits as a moderator or an external force onto different media, media personality research took a more advanced view of detecting the internal force (i.e., identifying the personality traits of

media itself).

Perhaps the first conceptual foundation for media personality research was presented by Chen (2006). The findings suggest that Website Personality Scale, or WPS, was accomplished with 38 items that were reliably and validly reduced to five factors: Intelligent, Fun, Organized, Candid, and Sincere. In the framework proposed here, three website personality dimensions related to three of the "Big Five" human and brand personality dimensions. Specifically, Agreeableness (human personality), Sincerity (brand personality) and Sincere (website personality) capture the idea of warmth and acceptance (Aaker, 1997). The dimensions Extroversion (human), Excitement (brand) and Fun (website) convey the notion of sociability, energy and activity, whereas the dimensions Conscientiousness (human), Competence (brand) and Intelligent (website) encapsulate responsibility, dependability, and security. The remaining two dimensions of the WPS (Organized and Candid) differed from the "Big Five" in human personality (Briggs, 1992) and the "Big Five" in brand personality. This pattern of findings suggests that while brand and website personality tap innate parts of human personality, website personality taps the domain that encompasses advertising-specific factors (Chen, 2006).

Inspired by Chen's foundational work, Correa (2010) examined the role of users' personality traits to see whether they may be crucial factors leading users to engage in this participatory media. In general, the study found that individuals' personality traits – extraversion, emotional stability and openness to experiences play a role in the uses of interactive social media (Correa, 2010).

This article is the first one attempting to link media personality with brand and human (i.e.,

consumer) personality for testing the effect of personality traits on consumer behavior. In doing so, it is crucial to understand which parts of the three concepts are comparable. Therefore, the author classified these comparisons among three personality related concepts into the following Table 1.

Table 1
Comparisons of personality model

Personality Models	Dimensions	Common Traits
The "Big Five"	Openness Conscientiousness Extraversion	
	Agreeableness	Agreeableness (human), Sincerity (brand) and Sincere (website)
	Neuroticism	
Five-factor Model of Brand Personality	Sincerity Excitement Competence Sophistication	Extraversion (human), Excitement (brand) and Fun (website)
	Ruggedness	Conscientiousness (human),
Media (Website) Personality Model	Intelligent Fun Organized Candid Sincere	Competence (brand) and Intelligent (website)

Three website personality dimensions relate to the "Big Five" human and brand personality dimensions. Specifically, Agreeableness (human personality), Sincerity (brand personality) and Sincere (website personality) capture the idea of warmth and acceptance (Aaker, 1997). The dimensions Extraversion (human), Excitement (brand) and Fun (website) convey the notion of sociability, energy and activity, whereas the dimensions Conscientiousness (human), Competence (brand) and Intelligent (website) encapsulate responsibility, dependability, and security. The remaining two dimensions of the WPS (organized and candid) differed from human personality

and brand personality.

For the purpose of the research, the author would like to conclude that human personality, brand personality and media (website) personality share THREE common factors, which are Agreeableness, Extraversion and Conscientiousness.

Although three types of personality are highly correlated with each other (because of the nature of personality), there were few researches ever touched the field that studying the synergy of utilizing three types of personalities as a combination in the marketing communication context. This paper will be the first conceptual foundation for a multi-personality research, which attempts to take a more multi-faceted personality perspective that anticipates the subsequent focus on personality synergies. In doing so, the author will next introduce *congruence effects* into the conceptual framework, in order to provide a theoretical approach to analyze the multi-faceted personality perspective.

CONGRUENCE EFFECTS

In psychology research, a considerable amount of attention has been given to the construct *congruence effect*, which refers to the coherence effect of multi-resource input information on the information processing.

Generally, there are types of congruence. Functional coherence was denned as occurring when participants' "personal strivings" (Emmons, 1986) help bring about each other or help bring about higher-level goals. Organismic congruence (Sheldon and Kasser, 1995) occur when participants strive for self-determined reasons or when strivings help bring about intrinsic rather than extrinsic higher level goals.

For decades, psychology researchers have been focus on congruence and contrast effects during affective priming of linguistic and musical stimuli (Peynircioglu et al., 2013), or build a relationship between personality traits and life Events in Depression (Robins, 1990), or attention behavior (Bakan and Lekart, 1966) and stimulus personality congruence, or effects of personality and situational variation in locus of control on cheating (Karabenick et al., 1976), or coherence and congruence-based measures of personality integration (Sheldon and Kasser, 1995).

Inspired and supported by these interesting and fruitful findings, some researchers in market place started to used congruence effect as a key way to study celebrity spokesperson and brand congruence (Misra, 1990), as a central part of consumers' profile (Schaninger and Sciglimpaglia, 2014), as a implacable effect of character–product congruence on children's liking of healthy foods (Droog et al., 2012), and as a major drive that motivate consumers' purchase intention (Parker, 2009).

However, despite this interest, research on congruence effect in marketing area has remained limited due in part to the lack of trial regarding multi-component congruence effect. What if the unit of analysis in congruence effect is more than two? Does it have the same framework as two-unit congruence effect? Does it allow interaction between each component? As a result, the understanding of a more complicated model of congruence effect is essential useful in solving marketing research problems, which are usually more convoluted and complex than psychological ones. In the following part, the author will specifically discuss two different types of personality congruence effect: brand personality – media personality congruence and brand personality – consumer personality congruence.

Brand Personality – Media Personality Congruence

Compared to the study of brand personality – consumer personality congruence, brand personality – media personality congruence is a relatively new topic. Unfortunately, communication researchers in mass media have yet studied this topic thoroughly. The author did not find many articles in this or its related field.

In the limited resources regarding this topic, various research confirmed the link between personality traits and media usage preference. Finn (1997) proposed seven hypotheses, and the following one is closely related to the purpose of this paper: lower level of extraversion will predict greater amount of mass media use. Introverts may be attracted to print media, especially books, because such media enable them to enjoy a sense of control and superiority over the external world (Nell, 1988).

The result of his article also suggest that much of the difficulty in demonstrating significant relationships between individual differences and mass media use are attributable to an intersecting plane of personality-based preferences (Finn, 1997). Thus, another stream of studies shift the focus from individual difference of mass media use to an different level: mass media preference.

In a lab experiment conducted by Weaver (1991), personality characteristics (extraversion, neuroticism and psychoticism) and media preferences (prime-time television programs, contemporary movies and popular music) were assessed for 119 participants. The results are somewhat in coherence with Finn's finding, with neuroticism being the most distinctively significant variable. A weaker correlation is evident between extraversion and interest in comedy

and adventure movies (James, 1991).

In summary, both two streams of research indicate a significant relationship between personality traits and mass media. Regardless of their difference in causal relationship, these findings implied that openness, neuroticism and extraversion are the three most powerful factors inside human personality, which will influence one's media preference significantly.

Based on the above rationale, the author believes that it is reasonable to assume that people will prefer to use the media sharing the same personality with themselves. Furthermore, this kind of media preference will increase the efficiency of the marketing communication. Studies have shown that personality congruence effect will increase subjects' preference for the related information and create a comfortable "environment" for the goal-pursuit (e.g., recognition, affection or purchase behavior) (Peynircioglu et al., 2013; Robins, 1990; Bakan and Lekart, 1966; Karabenick et al., 1976; Sheldon and Kasser, 1995). Consequently, between two sources of information (i.e., brand personality and media personality), it is reasonable to predict that if these information matches with each other, it will be easier for consumers to remember the focal information accurately. The author believes that media personality can be viewed as such "environment" and thus have a moderator effect on brand personality communication process. Hence, the author proposed the second hypothesis.

H1: The consumer-perceived brand personality has a stronger relationship with the intended brand personality if the information is conveyed through a website sharing the same personality traits with that brand.

Brand Personality – Consumer Personality Congruence

Nowadays, differentiating products based on their technical functions or quality is difficult (Dumaine, 1991; Veryzer, 1995). Due to its increasing relevance, many articles have investigated the symbolic meaning of products. The range of topics studied is very broad, varying from the cultural meaning of products (Kleine et al., 1993; McCracken, 1986), semiotics of consumption (Holman, 1981; Mick, 1986), products as tools for self-expression (Prentice, 1987), and impression formation based on possessions (Belk, 1978; Dittmar and Pepper, 1994; Gosling et al., 2002).

The simple presence of a particular brand (e.g. Gucci, Porsche, or Nike) can serve to define a person with respect to others, particularly when social identity is involved. By choosing brands with particular image associations (e.g. sophisticated or sporty), individuals can communicate to others the type of person they are or want to be seen as, in turn enhancing their own self-image and psychological well-being (Aaker, 1996; Graeff, 1996; Grubb and Grathwohl, 1967; Keller, 1993; Underwood et al., 2001).

Congruence effect provides both an organizational and a conceptual framework for a synergistic approach to brand marketing communication. Previous researchers have directly studied the brand personality and brand user-imagery congruence. The image that a person has of her/himself often influences the brands individuals' purchase (Plummer, 2000; Sirgy, 1982; Zinkham and Hong, 1991). For publicly consumed brands, user-imagery-based congruence measures contributed more often to the explanatory power of the model; in other words, congruence effect is statistically significant. For privately consumed brands, brand personality congruity produced significant regressions but did not account for a large portion of explained

variance, while user-imagery only entered one private brand model (Parker, 2009).

Researchers (e.g., Belk, 1988; Malhotra, 1988; Sirgy, 1982) indicate that based on the self-congruity perspective, consumers prefer products congruent with their self-concept. Self congruity is generally characterized as the “match” or “mis-match” between consumer self-image and a product image, brand image, or company image (Sirgy, 1986).

Based on the self-congruity perspective, Govers and Schoormans (2005) found that consumers prefer brands and products whose product personality characteristics are congruent with their own personality characteristics. Inspired by the above rationale, other researchers put emphasize on examining consumer personality-product image congruence to determine its influences on consumer product preference (Wu et al., 2011). Wu and his colleges found that in Taiwan China, consumers of different personality characteristics prefer brand images, which are congruent with their self image (Wu et al., 2011). This research provides a foundational support that personality congruence effect does not work only in western culture.

Govers and Schoormans (2005) examined the similarity of product personality – consumer personality congruence, user image (defined as “the stereotypic image of the generalized product user”) congruence and brand personality – consumer personality congruence). They found that in general people prefer products with a product personality that matches their self-image. Moreover, this positive effect of product personality – consumer personality congruence is found to be independent of the user image congruence effect. In addition, their results further suggest that product personality – consumer personality congruence, user-image congruence and brand-personality congruence have some similarities. Both user-image congruence and brand

personality – consumer personality congruence can increase preference (Sirgy, 1982; Aaker, 1999). Similarly, product personality – consumer personality congruence can also result in preference. All three constructs thus appear to result in consumer preference (Govers and Schoormans, 2005). Govers’ research showed that brand personality congruence effect could be indirectly supported by other related theory. To some extent, these three constructs can be viewed as interchangeable. They are just different types of terminology.

Some researcher has also studied indirect effect of brand personality – consumer personality congruence. One of such studies identified the role of functional (perceived quality) and symbolic brand associations (personality congruence and brand prestige) in creating brand loyalty in the ready-to-wear sector from the perspective of consumers. The result shows that personality congruence has an indirect positive effect on brand loyalty with the mediation of appearance and product quality (Erdogmus and Büdeyri-Turan, 2012)..

So far, various studies have been done to establish the relationship between congruence effects and consumer behavior. It is widely accepted that consumers prefer brands and products whose product personality characteristics are congruent with their own personality characteristics (Govers and Schoormans, 2005). Therefore, the author proposed the following hypothesis.

H2: The consumers’ preference towards a brand is influenced by the congruence of brand personality and consumers’ personality. A congruent personality combination will increase attitude towards brand.

METHODOLOGY

Measurement

Some researchers argue that as long as the traits are related to brand, media, and human personality, they can be used in subsequent analysis. For example, in Aaker's article "two roads to updating brand personality impression", she pointed out: "the personality trait we chose was 'sophistication' because it is related to both brands (Aaker, 1997) and people (Batra and Homer 2004)". Following the logic here, all of the three common dimensions listed in Table 1 are considered suitable to be tested in this study. Therefore, we chose excitement, sincerity and competence dimension.

Although various conceptualizations of the chosen dimensions are proposed in the literature, of relevance to the current work are the research in both psychology and marketing that developed the scale of extraversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness. In this research, the author will use Big Five Personality Inventory or the BFI developed by John and Srivastava (1999) to measure consumers' personality; Aaker's (1997) scale to measure brand personality, and Chen's (2006) website personality scale to measure website personality. In terms of the outcome variable, attitudes towards brand, the author used the scale developed by Nancy Spears (2004). The measurements are presented in the following Table 2.

It should be pointed out that for the purpose of the SEM analysis, the author chose items from these original scales according to the order of factor loadings and intentionally kept the number of items the same across different scales, because it is easier to create product indicators in this way (will be discussed in following section).

Table 2

Original Scales	Items	Factor loadings/Cronbach's α
Consumer Personality (John and Srivastava, 1999)	<u>I see myself as someone who...</u>	.851
	CE1: is talkative	.717
	CE2R: is reserved	.166
	CE3: is full of energy	.704
	CE4: generates a lot of enthusiasm	.834
	CE5R: tends to be quiet	.305
	CE6: has an assertive personality	.612
	CE7R: is sometimes shy, inhibited	.287
	CE8: is out going, sociable	.779
	<u>I see myself as someone who...</u>	.805
	CA1R: tends to find fault with others	.193
	CA2: is helpful and unselfish with others	.595
	CA3R: starts quarrels with others	.226
	CA4: has a forgiving nature	.68
	CA5: is generally trusting	.574
	CA6R: can be cold and aloof	.232
	CA7: is considerate and kind to almost everyone	.767
	CA8R: is sometimes rude to others	.324
	CA9: likes to cooperate with others	.746
	<u>I see myself as someone who...</u>	NA
	CC1: does a thorough job	NA
	CC2R: can be somewhat careless	NA
	CC3: is a reliable worker	NA
		NA

Brand Personality (Aaker, 1997)	Excitement	CC4R: tends to be disorganized	NA
		CC5R: tends to be lazy	NA
		CC6: perseveres until the task is finished	NA
		CC7: does things efficiently	NA
		CC8: makes plans and follows through with them	NA
		CC9R: is easily distracted	NA
		<u>To me, this brand is...</u>	.885
		BE1:daring	.610
		BE2: trendy	.718
		BE3: exciting	.798
		BE4:spirited	.801
	Sincerity	BE5: cool	.866
		BE6:young	.766
		BE7:imaginative	.905
		BE8:unique	.863
		BE9: up-to-date	.753
		BE10: independent	.488
		BE11: contemporary	.556
		<u>To me, this brand is...</u>	.844
		BS1:down-to-earth	.426
		BS2:family-oriented	.659
		BS3:small-twon	Not included
		BS4:honest	.852
		BS5:sincere	.882
		BS6:real	.889
		BS7:wholesome	.729
		BS8:original	.584

Media (Website) Personality (Chen,2006)	Competence	BS9:cheerful	.735
		BS10:sentimental	.447
		BS11:friendly	.721
		<u>To me, this brand is...</u>	.871
		BC1: reliable	.746
		BC2:hard working	.846
		BC3:secure	.782
		BC4:intelligent	.732
		BC5:technical	.776
		BC6:corporate	.777
		BC7:successful	.857
		BC8:leader	.804
		BC9:confident	.816
		<u>To me, this website is...</u>	.924
	Fun	MF1:colorful	.898
		MF2:attractive	.886
		MF3:friendly	.879
		MF4:appealing	.927
		MF5:flashy	.833
		MF6:action-pecked	.882
		MF7:showy	.835
		MF8:humorous	.851
		MF9:interactive	.828
		MF10:dynamic	.801
	Sincere	<u>To me, this website is...</u>	.833
		MS1:sincerely	.769
		MS2:down-to-earth	.815

	MS3:warm	.880
	<u>To me, this website is...</u>	.874
	MI1:Searchable	.821
	MI2:satisfying	.687
	MI3:informative	.843
	MI4up-to-date	.818
	MI5:comprehensive	.841
	MI6:knowledgable	.899
Intelligent	MI7:mature	.880
	MI8:easy	.848
	MI9:competent	.779
	MI10:agreeable	.840
	MI11:positive	.860
	MI12:fast	.812
	MI13:concise	.874
	MI14:organized	.844
	MI15:efficient	.829
	<u>To me, this brand is...</u>	.965
	AT1:appealing	.862
Attitude Towards Brand	AT2R:good	.897
(Nancy, 2004)	AT3:pleasant	.918
	AT4:favorable	.920
	AT5:likable	.915

Study Design

The author conducted an online experiment to collect the data. The stimuli for the study consisted of a) an artificial brand with a brand profile claiming it as a brand of a certain types of brand personality (e.g. excitement,); b) a screenshot of an artificial website whose personality traits (e.g., fun) will be measured; c) a banner along with a web site advertisement for the artificial brand. In total, three stimuli will be created for testing three dimensions of personality. After this procedure, a pretest is required to ascertain that the artificial brand and website's personality manipulation actually works for each stimuli.

At the beginning of the experiment, the participants were provided with the brand profile (a short sentence with manipulations) alongside with the artificial ads. After reading the brand profile and watching the ads, the participants were asked to rate its brand personality on the scale we've provided. Next, the participants were exposed to the screenshot of the artificial website along with the advertisement of that brand. After that, the participants were asked to rate the brand's personality again. Meanwhile, they were asked to rate their preference for that brand and the personality of the website on the scale presented previously. At the end of the experiment, the participants were asked to self-report their personality as a part of consumer personality.

Data analysis technique

In this study, the author used structural equation model or SEM approach to test the hypothesis. All the variables in the presented models are latent variables. Although there are many ways to estimate interaction effect between latent variables, historically product indicator approaches have been the most influential class of models. The author obeyed the following rules when creating product indicators: 1)

use all the information; 2) do NOT reuse any of the information (Hoyle, 2012). Thus matched pairs can be produced by different combination of cross-product. Noticed that we had intentionally let each scale have the same number of indicators (except sincere), so that we could create cross-product in a “ordered matching” way; that is, match indicators in order of the reliabilities of the latent variables. The item with the highest reliability from one latent predictor will be matched to the item with the highest reliability from another (Marsh, 2004). For technical problems we’ve encountered in AMOS, we did not standardize indicators before creating product indicators and we specified a mean structure for indicators in the model. In summary, first, we created product indicators for the latent product variables; next, we fit a latent model for which a mean structure was required (Hoyle, 2012).

Besides, before building a model by SEM, we did a CFA to confirm the validity of all the measurements.

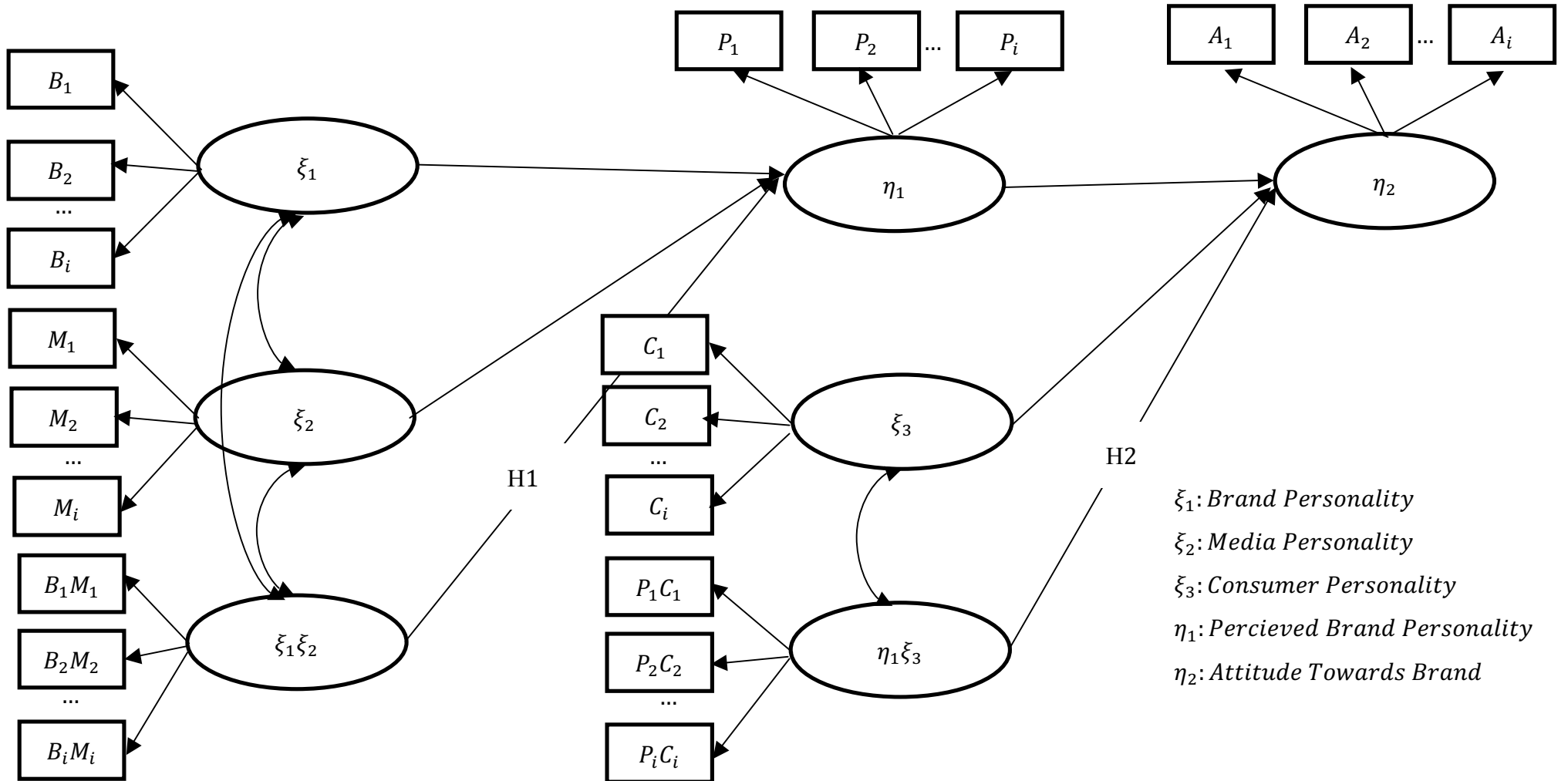
The Proposed Multistep Model

As stated in the previous part, congruence effect provides both an organizational and a conceptual framework for a synergistic approach to brand marketing communication (Brian T. Parker, 2009), it is logical to assume that congruence effect will affect 1) communication process 2) consumer behavior.

Hence the following model is presented. Figure 1 displays the conceptual model of the impact of personality congruence effect on consumer preference towards a brand. The model is termed multistep because of the subsequence from First Congruence Effect (it happens in the communication process; it is the congruence of brand personality and media personality) to the Second Congruence Effect (it happens in the consumer behavior process; it is the congruence of brand personality, media personality and consumer personality). The model considers media personality as a

moderator in the First Congruence effect, and consumer personality as a moderator in the Second Congruence effect.

FIGURE1
Multistep Model: Personality Congruence Effect on Consumer Behavior



The hypothesis can be formulated in the following way: to test H1, we have the following SEM equation: $\eta_1 = \alpha_1 + \gamma_{11}\xi_1 + \gamma_{12}\xi_2 + \gamma_{13}\xi_1\xi_2 + \zeta_1$; to test H2, we have the following SEM equation: $\eta_2 = \alpha_2 + \beta_{21}\eta_1 + \gamma_{23}\xi_3 + \gamma_{24}\eta_1\xi_3 + \zeta_2$. We are interested in testing the overall goodness-of-fit indices as well as the significance of the path coefficients (especially γ_{13} and γ_{24}).

Stimuli Development

Nine websites, each shown as a screenshot to the participants, were created. They are actually different combination of 3 Freedom brand personality (Sincerity, Excitement and Competence) * 3 Sight website personality (Sincere, Fun and Intelligent). The generated websites will simulate the situation where the brand manager of Freedom decided to launch an online banner advertisement campaign on Sight website.

Participants were randomly assigned to experimental conditions in which there human personality traits will also be scored. To enhance external validity, the author borrowed some idea from Aaker, Fournier and Brasel's work in 2004, including graphic design of the Web site and logo and copy writing for the text of all consumer brand-interactions (Aaker et al., 2004). Personality was manipulated through four venues. To avoid potential bias and increase validity, we also created a cover story, which we made a reference to Monga and Lau-Gesk's work (2007). The details are shown in Table 3 and Appendix A.

Table 3. Manipulation Design

Personality Type	Venues	Sincerity	Excitement	Competence
Brand Personality for Freedom	Brand Identity Elements	Sitting St. Bernard	Jumping Dalmatian Puppy	Hunting German Shepherd
	Slogan	Because the world is too meaningful to explore.	Because the world is too exciting to explore!	Because the world is best competently explored.
	Cover Story	<i>See in appendix A</i>	<i>See in appendix A</i>	<i>See in appendix A</i>
Website Personality for Sight	Content	A health news	An entertainment news	An economic news
	Website Visual Elements	Colors (Soft brown, oranges, yellows) Font (Arial)	Colors (bright red, greens, purples) Font (Chiller)	Colors (blue, grey, scarlet) Font (Times New Roman)

PRETEST

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

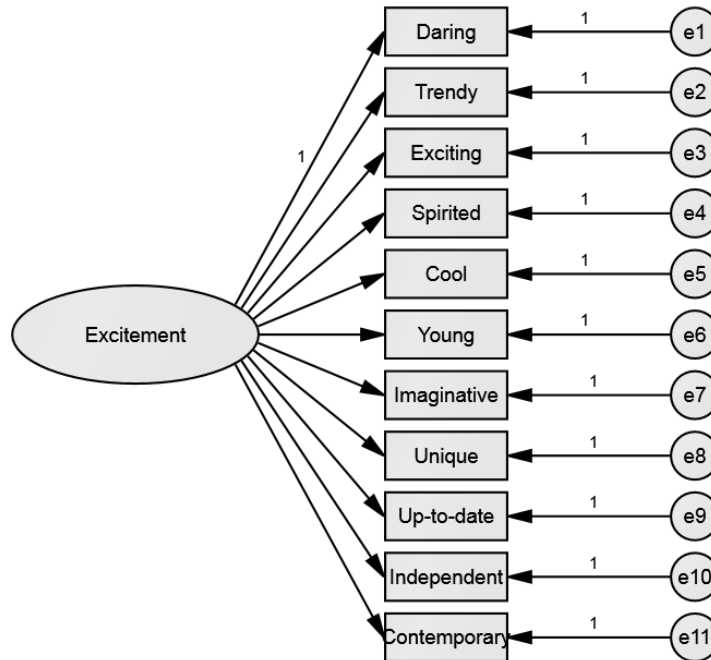
We distributed the pretest questionnaire and collected 26 valid responses. Previous researchers have conducted CFA for very small sample size (Essi Pöyry et al. 2013). Since the same brand personality and website personality scaled is used for three times in one questionnaire, we believe the available sample size ($n=77$) meets the minimum requirement for a CFA analysis.

First of all, we tested the normality of the dataset. The results shows that the normality assumption is slightly violated. Plus, the available sample size is less than $10 \times$ number of indicators. Therefore, we used generalized least square estimation method in AMOS 19.0, as suggested by a lot of researcher when conducting CFA for a small sample size (Flora and Curran, 2011).

Next, we analyzed the measurement model for each latent variables, including three brand personality dimensions (Excitement, Sincerity and Competence), three website personality dimensions (Fun, Sincere and Intelligent) and three human personality dimensions (Extroversion, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness). After that, we purified the indicator according to the high-to-low order of their factor loadings. Due to the space limit, we only show the procedure for Excitement for a quick demonstration.

We started with the 11-item measurement scale as shown in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2
11-item Measurement Model for Excitement



For simplicity, we did not present all the AMOS output here. The result shows that the model does not fit very well. Chi-Square=79.118 (with $p\text{-value} < .05$), GFI=.816 ($< .9$), AGFI=.723($< .9$), CFI=.48 ($< .9$) and RMSEA ($> .06$). The statistics suggests that we should reject this model.

All the parameter estimates are significant, except the variance of the latent variable. We took a further look at the standardized estimates for each indicators (shown in the last column of Table 2).

The standardized estimates are the factor loadings for the indicators. It also represents the reliability of the indicators. In this way, we purified the indicators based on the high-to-low order of standardized estimates. The highest five indicators are Imaginative, Cool, Unique, Spirited and Exciting.

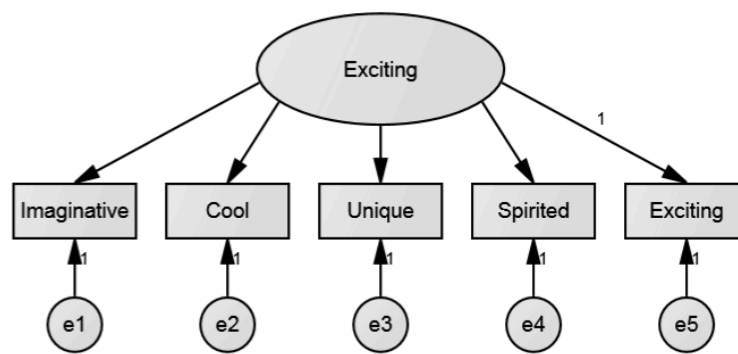
Therefore, the re-specified model is shown in Figure 3.

The result shows that purified measurement model performed much better than

the 11-item model. All the goodness-of-fit statistics improved, except a slight decrease of RMSEA. GFI is above the acceptable level and Chi-Square increased from .01 to .3. All the parameter estimates are significant, and all the standardized loadings are above .7. Although this model is still slightly flawed (due to small sample size. The smaller the sample size is, the bigger chance to make a measurement error), we should accept it as a better model.

We repeated the same procedure for the other latent variables whenever it was necessary.

FIGURE 3
Purified Measurement Model for Excitement



In summary, indicators for three brand personality dimensions and three website personality dimensions were successfully purified. However, indicators for human personality were not, mainly because of small sample size. The human personality scale was used only once in the questionnaire. Hence, the available sample size equaled to 25, which was too small for a CFA analysis. The chosen indicators are shown in Table 4. For more detail information, readers are welcome to view the AMOS output and pretest report, which are submitted as support materials.

Manipulation Check

We first started manipulation check with each purified indicator. We conducted

general linear regression analysis, available in SPSS 22..

The dependent variable is the indicators and the independent variable is the types of advertisement or website template we've created for different types of brand/website stimuli. We tested the significance of the coefficients under $\alpha=.1$. We are looking for the evidence showing that the indicator has a β -coefficient of the corresponding dummy variable which is 1) positive and 2) significant.

Table 4 Purified Indicators	
Dimension	Chosen Items
Excitement	Imaginative, Unique, Cool, Spirited and Exciting
Sincerity	Honest, Sincere, Real, Wholesome and Cheerful
Competence	Hard-working, Successful, Leader and Confident
Fun	Colorful, Attractive, Friendly, Appealing and Action-pecked
Sincere	Down-to-earth, Sincere and Warm
Intelligent	Knowledgeable, Mature, Easy, Positive and Concise

For the purpose of demonstration, we classified a series of this test into a summary table, as shown in Table 5.1. For more details, readers are welcome to take a further look at the SPSS output file attached as supporting materials.

In summary, the manipulation worked well, except the one for competence brand personality. Small sample size should be the reason for those invalid* indicators, which is acceptable. However, the competence manipulation needs to be revised or removed from the study.

Table 5.1 Manipulation Check at Individual Level					
Dimension	Indicators	Valid or not	Dimension	Indicators	Valid or not
Excitement	Exciting	Valid	Fun	Colorful	Valid
	Spirited	Invalid*		Attractive	Valid
	Cool	Valid		Friendly	Valid
	Imaginative	Valid		Appealing	Valid
	Unique	Invalid*		Action-pecked	Valid
Sincerity	Honest	Valid	Sincere	Sincerely	Valid
	Sincere	Valid		Down-to-earth	Valid
	Real	Valid		Warm	Valid
	Wholesome	Invalid*		Knowledgeable	Valid
	Cheerful	Invalid*		Mature	Valid
Competence	Hard-working	Invalid	Intelligent	Easy	Invalid*
	Successful	Invalid		Positive	Invalid*
	Leader	Invalid		Concise	Invalid*
	Confident	Invalid			

**Invalid with an asterisk (Invalid*) means that indicator met criteria 1, but failed at criteria 2. In other word, the valence of the indicator was correct, but the difference between stimuli was not significant.*

From another angle, we reran the manipulation check at an overall scale level by creating a summary variable (i.e. Average of the indicators) for each personality dimension and rerun the general linear model. Meanwhile, we also check the reliability of the scale. The results are shown in Table 5.2. The Cronbach's alpha is also shown in the last column of Table 2.

Table 5.2 Manipulation Check at Overall Scale Level		
Dimension	Cronbach's α	Valid or not
Excitement	.885	Valid
Sincerity	.844	Valid
Competence	.871	Invalid
Fun	.924	Valid
Sincere	.833	Valid
Intelligent	.874	Valid

The result shows a good reliability of the scales we've purified. In terms of validity, Competence manipulation still does not work well at the overall scale level. All the other manipulations are confirmed to be valid. In conclusion, we will continue main study focusing on congruity with excitement and sincerity dimensions and remove competence dimension from this study.

THE STUDY

An online survey with stimuli involving 2 (brand personality) by 2 (website personality) conditions was conducted in August of 2015. Participants were recruited under the guise of a website development test for a news site named Sight. They were also informed of the appearance of banner advertisement launched by a travel agency named Freedom. The cover story helped enhance the external validity and justify the high level of interaction and monitoring the study required. The choice of travel agency was relevant because it is very close to the participants' daily life, which made it easy to manipulate information in this product category.

To recruit participants, the author utilized the online survey panel purchased from Qualtrics. The questionnaire was edited and launched on Qualtrics's website server. For compensation, participants were paid \$5 each.

The survey flow of the questionnaire randomly assigned participants into four

experimental conditions. Before and after the participants were exposed to the stimuli, they were asked to rate several Likert scale regarding brand personality, human personality and website personality, as well as several demographic questions.

RESULTS

All analyses were run with the full set of 355 valid respondents. Notice that 15 respondents were considered outliers, therefore deleted from the dataset. Demographic profiles represented a normal result, and no evidence for response bias was found at this stage. Results from SPSS 21.0 and AMOS 21.0 are both reported.

Purifying Indicators

In the pretest, we failed to purify the indicators of human personality due to a small sample size. Therefore the first step in the main study is to redo it. Using the same procedure discussed in the pretest section, we purified the indicators for agreeableness extraversion as well as attitude towards brand. For simplicity, the result of these CFA models is presented in Table 2.

In short words, based on the standardized loadings, the purified indicators for agreeableness are Unselfish, Forgiving, Trusting, Considerate and Cooperate. For the purified CFA model, the GFI=.966, AGFI=.898, CFI=.953, and the Cronbach's α =.805. These statistics are all acceptable. However, notice that, in this stage, we found a clear pattern showing that reverse-coded variables did not perform so well in this study. We will turn to this issue in a later section.

The same procedure was repeated for Extraversion. Again, reverse-coded variables were eliminated. The revised CFA model has GFI=.971, AGFI=.914, CFI=.972, and the Cronbach's α =.851. These statistics are all acceptable.

For attitude towards brand, its five indicators performed very well. The CFA

model has GFI=.981, AGFI=.939, CFI=.994, and the Cronbach's α =.965. Thus, no purification is required for this scale.

SEM With Latent Interactions

SEM analyses reveals the latent structure for the three personalities. Besides, in this part we are not interested in testing the difference among conditions. Therefore, we combined the data collected from four conditions into a single dataset. After deleting 15 outliers, the final dataset consists of 355 valid samples (n=355).

In the pretest section, we did not find a second-order factor. In order to test the congruence effect, we built two models on the basis of the proposed theoretical model (see in Figure 1). We cross-multiplied the indicators based on their reliability rank to generate the latent interaction indicators. These two models are shown in Figure 2 and Figure 3.

FIGURE 2
Excitement Congruence Effect

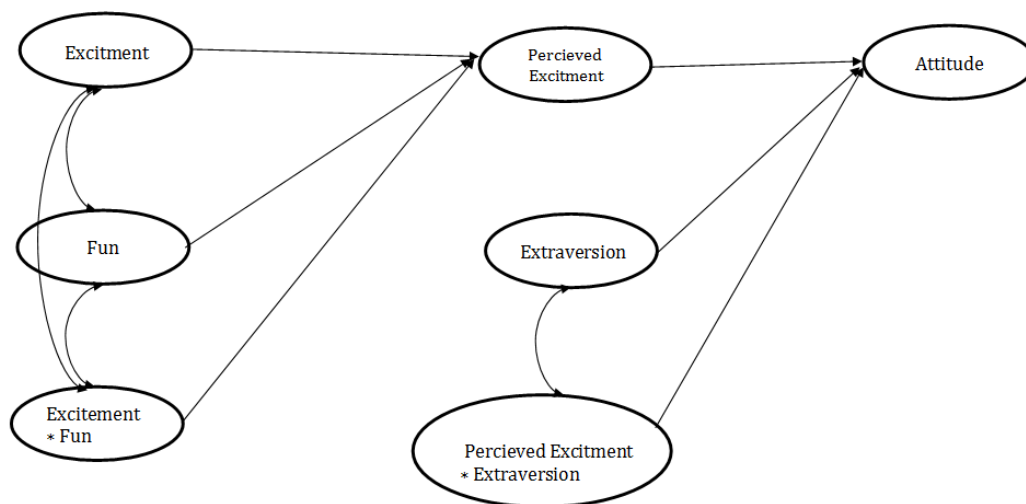
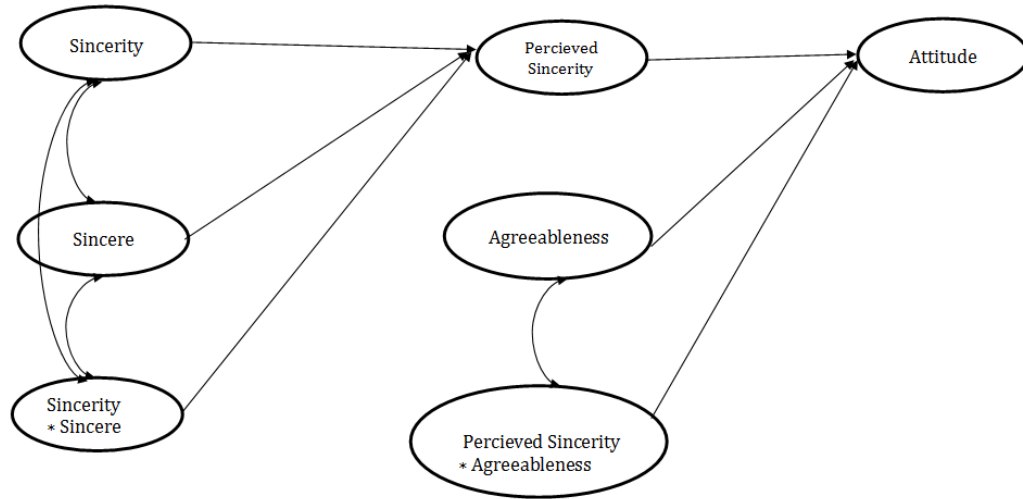


FIGURE 3
Sincerity Congruence Effect



AMOS 21.0 was used to calculate the parameter estimates. Since the sample size was larger than 350 and the sample distribution was close to normal, maximum likelihood method was applied. We report the overall model fit as well as the structural coefficients in the following Table 6.1 and Table 6.2

TABLE 6.1				
Overall Model Fitness				
Model	NFI	RFI	CFI	RMSEA
Excitement Congruence	.562	.499	.576	.213
Sincerity Congruence	.527	.485	.539	.237

TABLE 6.2
Structural Coefficients

Model			Standardized Regression Weights	p-value
Excitement Congruence				
Percieved Excitement	<---	Excitement	-.041	.53
Percieved Excitement	<---	Fun	.296	***
Percieved Excitement	<---	Excitement*Fun	.625	***
Attitude Towards Brand	<---	Percieved Excitement	.876	***
Attitude Towards Brand	<---	Extraversion	.25	***
Attitude Towards Brand	<---	Percieved Excitement*Extraversion	-.353	***
Sincerity Congruence				
Percieved Sincerity	<---	Sincerity	-.066	.29
Percieved Sincerity	<---	Sincere	.079	.312
Percieved Sincerity	<---	Sincerity*Sincere	.828	***
Attitude Towards Brand	<---	Percieved Sincerity	.877	***
Attitude Towards Brand	<---	Agreeableness	.285	***
Attitude Towards Brand	<---	Percieved Sincerity*Agreeableness	-.333	***

** Path coefficients marked with three asterisks are significant under $\alpha=.05$*

The results show that neither of the models performed very well in terms of overall model fitness. CFI is around .55 and RMSEA is higher than suggested value .06. However, when taking a look into the component fitness, we found that in both model, the path coefficient going from brand personality * website personality interaction to perceived brand personality were positively significant. It is consistent with H1. On the other hand, the path coefficient going from perceived brand personality * human personality interaction to attitude towards brand is negatively significant, which contradicts what we have expected in H2.

ANCOVA

To explore more of this dataset, we conducted another analysis. We implied direct measures instead of indirect measures by coding brand personality and website personality as dummy variables. We also included human personality traits as

continuous covariates by average the indicators. We also allowed two-way and three-way interactions. The result is shown in the following Table 6.3.

TABLE 6.3 ANCOVA					
Model	B	std error	t	Sig.	VIF
(intercept)	2.150	.509	4.222	.000	
BP	-.682	.818	-.834	.405	64.866
WP	.670	.821	.816	.415	65.211
BP*WP	.346	1.319	.262	.794	126.437
Avg_Extraversion	.187	.159	1.181	.238	6.224
BP*EX	-.253	.199	-1.271	.205	46.543
WP*EX	-.082	.215	-.381	.703	55.895
BP*WP*EX	.295	.296	.997	.320	75.897
Avg_Agreeableness	.141	.176	.799	.425	5.173
AG*BP	-.376	.236	1.590	.113	82.492
AG*WP	-.116	.250	-.465	.643	92.906
BP*WP*AG	-.344	.363	-.946	.345	144.209

**Dependent Variable: Avg_Attitude*

The adjusted R-square for this model is .22, which is below the suggested value .5. In terms of the coefficients results, we found the interaction of brand personality and human personality (BP*EX and BP*AG) are both negative, which is consistent with the SEM analyses.

ANOVA

The final analyses is to median split sample by human personality. We check the validity by conducting a t-test. The result shows that the mean difference between the groups are statistically significant.

Then we conducted a 2 (brand personality) by 2 (website personality) by 2 (human personality) ANOVA in order to find some potential pattern of the dataset. General linear model function is SPSS was used in this part. The result is shown in Table 6.4.

TABLE 6.4 ANOVA			
Model	df	F	Sig.
Overall model	15	.809	.668
Intercept	1	3506.020	.000
BP	1	.508	.476
WP	1	.201	.654
Group_Extraversion	1	1.305	.254
Group_Agreeableness	1	1.939	.165
BP * WP	1	.011	.915
BP *	1	.209	.648
Group_Extraversion	1	.344	.558
BP *	1	.344	.558
Group_Agreeableness	1	.027	.871
WP *	1	.027	.871
Group_Extraversion	1	.069	.794
WP *	1	.069	.794
Group_Agreeableness	1	.187	.666
Group_Extraversion	1	.187	.666
*	1	.187	.666
Group_Agreeableness	1	1.506	.221
BP * WP *	1	1.506	.221
Group_Extraversion	1	.359	.549
BP * WP *	1	.359	.549
Group_Agreeableness	1	.438	.509
BP *	1	.438	.509
Group_Extraversion	1	.438	.509
*	1	.438	.509
Group_Agreeableness	1	1.604	.206
WP *	1	1.604	.206
Group_Extraversion	1	1.604	.206
*	1	1.604	.206
Group_Agreeableness	1	1.113	.292
BP * WP *	1	1.113	.292
Group_Extraversion	1	1.113	.292
*	1	1.113	.292
Group_Agreeableness	1	1.113	.292

**Dependent Variable: Avg_Attitude*

The result shows that overall F-value is not statistically significant, neither are the IVs'. Also notice that no evidence has been found showing that incongruence personality combination had a negative or significant effect on attitudes towards brand.

In summary, the results from three types of model do not completely support H1

or H2. First, the overall model performance are not very ideal, despite SEM or ANOVA or ANCOVA. Second, the significance of certain coefficients could partially support H1, whereas contradict H2.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The result from the main study partially supported H1 regarding the congruence effect of brand personality and website personality. In other words, if the brand manager decide to launch an advertisement on a website with similar personality traits, the effect will be greater than on another one with different personality traits. This result holds true across two personality dimensions. In terms of H2, it was not supported by the data set. Although consumers perceived the brand personality to a higher extent, they do not prefer the product with the same personality traits as themselves. A possible explanation could be: when choosing a travel agency, people pay more attention to the service (e.g., destinations or discounts) they can get from the agency than the brand's image.

Contributions and New Insights

This findings bridges the gap between congruence effect and consumer behavior research by introducing multiple pairs of congruence combination and studying the moderating effect of each. The study proposes a model of online customer behavior in the context of brand marketing communication and compares all the relationships between different personality settings. Hence, firstly, the major theoretical contribution is developing a more comprehensive and coherent model of personality-behavior relationship. Secondly, we extended the concept of congruence effect and create more insights on this important phenomenon. We modeled these variables in the online environment and test the model in a SEM approach.

This work has important practical implications for marketing managers. More generally, although practitioners often argue that attitude objects such as brands can be imbued with personality traits (e.g., Ogilvy 1983), the current research suggests that conveying a brand personality is a dynamic and tricky process that is not controlled solely by the marketer. The same objective stimulus (in this case, advertisement) was processed differently by people in terms of personal, subjective meanings associated with how they view themselves and objective meanings related to how well the task environment (in this case, website) fits the stimulus.

Limitations and Future Research

This study was inspired in part by the trend of more SEM approach study in consumer research, particularly those involving latent interaction. Our aim was to create a study setting that would blend some of the advantages of a SEM approach study: 1) the measurement error is considered as a part of the model. In traditional linear regression model, we could only test the model one part by one part without considering the measurement error. 2) the result of a SEM model can be analyzed at the overall model level as well as component level. 3) SEM is a better approach to capture the nature of an unobserved variable. In traditional linear regression model, we use the average value of the indicators to represent a latent variable, which contradicts the nature of a latent variable. Latent variables can not be directly measured under any condition. Once it is represented by a certain value, it is not latent anymore.

This article presents a set of intentions that contribute to consumer behavior literature focused on SEM approach. marketing communication, congruence effects, and personality, however, it is not without its limitations, which includes a loose control of respondent quality, limited resource, an “unreal” setting of website, the

choice of a single product/media category and external validity.

The problem of using online panel is that we are not able to monitor the behavior of the participants. It is highly possible that the participants answer the questions without having read through the instructions. In fact, to determine the extent of this problem, we've embedded several quality control measurements in the questionnaire, such as page timer and reverse coding. However, as discussed previously, the result of reverse-coded variable did not performed very well. This may indicates that the participants did not pay enough attention to the questions. With regard to page timer, in some cases, the participants spent extremely long time (like hours) or short time (like seconds) to answer the question. Although we've eliminated cases deemed as severe outliers, the problem still retains. A suggestion for future study is to utilize a study method whose quality can be more effectively monitored by the researchers. For example, paper survey or lab experiment.

Theoretically, the study should be carried under an interactive online condition. We should design a fiction website which allows the participants to gain the experience closer to real life. However, with all the resources available to the researchers, we were technically not able to create such a website. Instead, we utilize a designed website screenshot. The nature of screenshot is different from an active website, which may cause problem when we applied the website personality traits to it.

Our research is also limited to the context other than website in which personality traits are not fully identified. Further research is necessary to check the generalizability of this study in terms of other media (e.g., print, TV, radio and etc). However, since no previous study has been done, in such cases, the first thing should be done is to identify personality traits for these media. Additionally, whether the

result of this study could be generalized to another product category remains uncertain, since we've observed a negative significant variable which is believed to be caused by the choice of travel agency.

This study only includes "Excitement" and "Sincerity" as independent variable. Future study should test whether process can be applied to other personality traits, especially Competence. The competence dimension was eliminated in the pretest stage because of a low validity. However, the author believe a better-designed website page will fix this problem.

The researchers did not consider any potential moderators. Additional research is also necessary to explore the impact of moderation effect between brand information and consumers' behavior. People's decision may be influenced by additional information simultaneously or days, weeks, or even years after initial brand personality are formed. This information may include: content, mood, creativeness, brand familiarity, media quality, involvement, interactivity, vividness and so on. Future study will be promising if they choose several of these moderators and study the inter-relationship between them, as well as the moderation effect on the personality-decision model.

The name of brand "Freedom" could have weakened the sincerity manipulation of brand personality, although pretest suggests that the manipulation was strong enough.

The SEM analysis of the main study did not take into account the repeated measures nature of brand personality measurements, which could cause the bias and dilute the significance.

Finally, previous research shows that brand personality varies hugely from culture to another culture (Aaker et al., 2001; Sung and Tinkham, 2005). For instance,

compared with U.S., in Japan, the set of "brand personality" dimensions contains Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, and Sophistication as well as culture-specific Japanese Peacefulness (instead of ruggedness). Thus the meaning of the study should be further discussed by future research in the context of cross-cultural research on values and affect, globalization issues, and cultural frame shifting.

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Appendix A: Cover Story

The participants are told that:

You are taking part in a website development test. The developer would like to understand your perception of the website.

In addition, also consider the brand advertised on the website.

Two leading travel agencies have joined forces to create a new agency, named Freedom, that combines the genuineness and consideration with friendship and spirit of service.

The last sentence for excitement replaced “genuineness and consideration” with “energy and imaginary”, also “friendship and spirit of service” with “excitement and trendiness”.

The last sentence for competence replaced “genuineness and consideration” with “safety and responsibility”, also “friendship and spirit of service” with “efficiency and outstanding quality”.

APPENDIX B: Website Screenshots