

The relationship of consumer personality trait, brand personality and brand loyalty: an empirical study of toys and video games buyers

Long-Yi Lin

Associate Professor, Graduate School of Management Sciences, Aletheia University, Taipei, Taiwan

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship of consumer personality trait, brand personality and brand loyalty.

Design/methodology/approach – The convenience sampling method was used to collect primary data. A total of 400 adult consumers were interviewed who looked round or bought toys and video games in Taipei City Mall, and 387 effective questionnaires were collected; the effective response rate was 96.75 per cent. Regression analysis was adopted to test hypotheses.

Findings – The major findings were: a significantly positive relationship between extroversion personality trait and excitement brand personality; a significantly positive relationship between agreeableness personality trait and excitement brand personality, sincerity brand personality and competence brand personality; competence and sophistication brand personality have a significantly positive influence on affective loyalty; competence, peacefulness and sophistication brand personality have a significantly positive influence on action loyalty; agreeableness and openness personality trait have a significantly positive influence on affective loyalty; agreeableness and openness personality trait have a significantly positive influence on action loyalty.

Research limitations/implications – The restriction on selecting countries and brands, and the restraint of the sampling coverage present limitations. The paper verifies that consumers with different personality traits will have different cognizance towards brand personality, which can also be applied to the toy and video game industries. The paper proves that a distinct brand personality can appeal to more brand loyalty. It shows that agreeableness and openness of personality traits have a positive influence on brand loyalty.

Practical implications – The paper highlights the value of brand personality that benefits a company. It emphasizes the importance of brand loyalty for a company. Consumers who register in agreeableness and openness are the target audience for BANDAI.

Originality/value – The extra value of the paper is to link the theory and practice, and explore the relationship of consumer personality trait, brand personality and brand loyalty.

Keywords Personality, Brand identity, Brand loyalty

Paper type Research paper

An executive summary for managers and executive readers can be found at the end of this article.

Introduction

Nowadays in the trend towards fewer children and population aging, the ages of the customer group who play with toys are going to expand upward and downward from 0-100. Many outstanding stylish toys have been designed to attract office workers aged from 30-40, even to the more affluent 50 + age group. It seems that the toy industry will not be able to survive if they do not include these adults as their core targets consumers. Therefore, the toy industry has to keep digging out what adults want then satisfy their innermost desires. The situation is the same as in the video game industry. According to the video game player population distribution in the USA in 2006, the consumer group aged between 18 and 49 was still the majority, taking up to 44 per cent of total sales.

Nevertheless, the players aged below 18 and over 49 have also been increasingly emphasized recently. Toy and video game industries are intimately interrelated. Many toys and video games are the extension from cartoon animation or movies, and Japan is the main representative. Japan exports its toy and video game products in great numbers to Taiwan and the total sales ranked the number two among Taiwan's toy importers in 2006.

Distinct brand personality plays a key role in the success of a brand. It leads customers to perceive the brand personality and develop a strong connection to the brand (Doyle, 1990). A brand personality should be shaped to be long-lasting and consistent. Besides, it should also be different from other brands and meet consumer's demands (Kumar *et al.*, 2006). Hence, the consumers of those toys and video games are like the brand spokespersons and become the basis for suppliers to build brand personality. With the specific brand personality, consumers of varying personality traits will be attracted and their brand preference will then be further developed. In addition, a company can maintain a good relationship with customers through its brand personality (Aaker and Biel, 1993).

Because brands have their own particular personalities, consumers may treat brands as real human beings. In this case, consumers will expect the people's words, attitudes, behavior or thoughts and so on to meet their respective

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personality traits (Aaker, 1996). Consumers may likely use the brand and products in line with their own personality traits, in other words, all the marketing activities are aimed at having consumers believe and recognize a brand personality, and reinforcing the communication between the brand and the consumer (Govers and Schoormans, 2005), in order to enhance the brand's loyalty and equity.

Brand personality has become a widely discussed issue in recent years. It has been emphasized in many brands and products, including durables goods, consumables goods, entertainment and luxury goods, and so on (Kumar *et al.*, 2006; Govers and Schoormans, 2005; Mengxia, 2007). However, only a few toy and video game brands are used as the marketing researches target of brand personality. Thus, try to cover the gap of the literature is the first motivation of this study. Consumers may have their own preference for the brand and product in compliance with their brand personality and personality traits or their own concepts (Govers and Schoormans, 2005). However, in fact, brand preference only involves in the affection in brand loyalty, it may not develop any purchase behavior (Dyson *et al.*, 1996). Only a few researchers have simultaneously combined affective loyalty and behavior loyalty into their investigation on the relationship of personality traits and brand personality with brand loyalty. Therefore, the second motivation of the study is formed to fill this gap as well.

This study has three major objectives:

- 1 Explore the relationship of personality traits and brand personality.
- 2 Study the influence of brand personality on brand loyalty.
- 3 Examine the impact of personality traits on brand loyalty.

Literature review

Personality trait

The Trait Theory is the most influential school of thought in personality psychology, many researchers derived similar conclusions in their studies of personalities (Chen and Chang, 1989). Allport is considered the founder of personality psychology. He described the personality as "a real person." He also provided the more specific and well-know definitions of personality. Personality is the dynamic organization of psycho physiological systems that creates a person's characteristic pattern of behavior, thoughts, and feeling (Allport, 1961). A personal disposition is defined as "a generalized neuropsychic structure (peculiar to the individual), with the capacity to render many stimuli functionally equivalent, and to initiate and guide consistent (equivalent) forms of adoptive and stylistic behavior" (Allport, 1937). Some personality trait researchers believe that, for the most part, personality traits are generated by nature and are stable, but some other researchers indicate personality traits will continue to evolve and may even change, even though the natural-born temperament may never change (Sternberg, 2000).

The Trait Theory can be divided into two schools. The first school believes that people have the same set of traits, and why every one is different is because the level of each trait is shown differently. Thus, traits commonly exist in every one of us. However, the other school believes that individual variance comes from the trait combination, which varies from one

person to another, so that everyone has his/her own set of specific traits (Sternberg, 2000).

Allport (1961) categorized traits into three types: cardinal trait, central trait and secondary trait. Basically, Cattell (1943) divided traits into two categories: surface trait and source trait. Eysenck (1975) claimed that personality has only three major traits: extroversion, neuroticism and the psychotic. McCrae *et al.* (1986) classified personality traits into five factors:

- 1 extroversion;
- 2 agreeableness;
- 3 conscientiousness;
- 4 neuroticism; and
- 5 openness.

The five factors are generally referred to as the Big Five Model, which is extensively used nowadays.

Based on the history of Big Five Model, Galton (1884) first started to use various Lexical Hypotheses to describe and differentiate personality traits according to Roget's *Thesaurus* (synonym dictionary). As estimated, more than 1,000 vocabulary words were found relating to traits. Allport and Odbert (1936) extended Galton's research and theory and collected 17,953 adjective words from *Webster's New International Dictionary*. Cattell (1943) reduced the 17,953 adjective words describing personality traits to 171.

By examining many studies conducted by trait theory researchers, Norman (1963) found five basic factors through factor analysis of the personality traits measured in peers. The five basic factors are: extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and culture. Afterwards, Goldberg (1990) elicited five major traits from a new variable table to support the Big Five Model. There is a slight difference between the Big Five Model at present and the one proposed by Norman. McCrae *et al.* (1986) modified the factor "culture" propounded by Norman to be "openness", because they thought that culture only carried small factor loading in the field of wisdom and culture while originality, creativity, independence and confidence contributed more factor loading. Even if the name is different, the five factors kept emerging in the subsequent studies (Liebert and Liebert, 1994).

McCrae *et al.* (1986) used the "Big Five Model" scale to measure personality traits and the nine-point Likert scale was also applied in measurement. Chow (1993) followed the method used by McCrae *et al.* (1986) to measure personality traits, deleting items with factor loading lower than 0.5 in the original scale, and applied a five-point Likert scale in measurement.

Brand personality

Aaker (1997) defines brand personality as "a set of human characteristics associated to a brand." Brand personality mainly comes from three sources: the first one is the association consumers have with a brand, secondly, the image a company tries hard to create, for example using an advertising spokesperson to create a corporate image, and the third is about the product attributes, for example product categories and distribution channels. Personality is a useful variable in the consumer's choices of brands. The brands selected by consumers are usually in compliance with their own personalities. Hence, brand personality offers the

functions of self-symbolization and self-expression (Keller, 1993).

Levy (1959) indicates that brand personality contains demographic features, such as gender, age and social class, and they may be directly influenced by the image of the brand users, personnel and product spokespersons, and indirectly affected by product attributes as well. For instance, Marlboro is a cigarette brand more likely to be smoked by males because “macho cowboys” are the brand image built up by Marlboro, Mercedes cars tend to be driven by those in higher social classes because Mercedes shows an image of high quality and high efficiency. Kotler and Keller (2005) note that consumers usually select brands having self-concept congruence. However, sometimes, consumers will select a brand according to their ideal self-concept or the social self-concept. Thus, brand personality may have the function of demonstrating and expressing your own personality at the same time.

Karande *et al.* (1997) believed that product designers and marketing personnel may benefit from the features of brand personality, because they may develop their marketing plans according to the features. In addition, with brand personality, a product can be differentiated from other brands. Furthermore, brand affection can also be developed by brand personality, which can in turn reinforce consumer’s brand personality.

Milewicz and Herbig (1994) pointed out that brands have their own personalities, so users may choose the products matching their preferences and personalities according to perceived product images. A successful brand knows how to build its distinct brand personality, which facilitate customers to perceive its unique brand personality, then developing a strong binding relationship with the brand (Doyle, 1990). According to Kumar *et al.* (2006) the crucial element in constituting brand personality is to have a clear differentiation in conveying brand personality. The personality shall be consistently and persistently cultivated over the long run. When trying to change the way a brand image is conveyed, the original brand personality and value should first be strengthened in order to reduce to the minimum customer’s feelings of chaos and inconsistency.

Aaker (1997) used personality psychology to develop a “brand personality scale,” identified the five dimensions: sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness of brand personality, and induce 15 facets and 42 traits. Aaker *et al.* (2001) also conducted a brand personality study in Japan in 2007, for which they slightly modified the brand personality scale released in 2001 exclusive for Japan, by taking different local and culture backgrounds into account, and established a new brand personality scale befitting the Japan market. Similar to the brand personality scale of the USA, the newly established brand personality scale is also constituted of five dimensions:

- 1 excitement;
- 2 competence;
- 3 peacefulness;
- 4 sincerity; and
- 5 sophistication.

In addition, it induces 12 facets and 36 traits.

Phau and Lau (2000) used the 36 traits in the brand personality scale to measure brand personality, in which the

respondents were requested to select the degree of their impression on a five-point Likert scale. Han (2004) used the Japanese brand personality scale to measure brand personality, in which the fittest two traits in each dimension were selected as a dimension’s facets and a five-point Likert scale was utilized for measurement.

Brand loyalty

The definition of brand loyalty regarded as the most complete one was proposed by Jacoby and Olson (1970). They defined brand loyalty as the result from non-random, long existence behavior response, and it was a mental purchase process formed by some certain decision units who considered more than one brands. In early researches, researchers usually took the act of repurchase as the method of measure brand loyalty. But in recent studies, some researchers indicate that to measure brand loyalty the best way is to measure by affective loyalty (Bennett and Rundle-Thiele, 2000). On the other hand, there are theories like polygamous loyalty theory, which states that customers do not buy only one brand (Dowling and Uncles, 1997). As indicated by Baldinger and Rubinson (1996), brand loyalty covers affective loyalty and action loyalty. Affective loyalty refers to the consumer’s preference and affinity for a specific brand but the actual purchase behavior has not yet to be developed while action loyalty is shown by the actual purchase behavior conducted by consumers for a specific brand.

Groth and McDaniel (1993) believed that affective loyalty represents consumer loyalty to a specific brand all the way. Eisman (1990) defined action loyalty as consumers’ satisfaction with regular purchases of a specific brand. In view of the above mentioned different types of consumer brand loyalty, Assael (1993) defined brand loyalty as the repeated purchase behavior based on consumers’ satisfaction with their accumulated experiences in purchasing the same brand.

According to the study conducted by Oliver (1999), the brand loyalty was classified into four parts: cognitive loyalty, affective loyalty, conation loyalty and action loyalty. Day (1996) added two indicators, action and affection for brand loyalty and divided brand loyalty into true brand loyalty and spurious brand loyalty. The spurious brand loyalty consumers may make repeated purchases only because the brand they purchase is the only one choice in the stores. On the other hand, true brand loyalty consumers should show both psychological and affective commitments in addition to repurchase consistency. As shown in Figure 1, Dick and Basu (1994) classified loyalty into:

- 1 True loyalty.
- 2 Spurious loyalty.
- 3 Latent loyalty.
- 4 No loyalty.

Figure 1 Model of loyalty

| | | Repeat Purchase Possibility | |
|------------------|------|-----------------------------|----------------|
| | | High | Low |
| Related Attitude | High | True Loyalty | Latent Loyalty |
| | Low | Spurious Loyalty | No Loyalty |

Source: Dick and Basu (1994, p.101)

Customer loyalty is viewed as the strength of the relationship between an individual's relative attitude and their repeat patronage.

In the market which becomes more and more competitive and market segments gets smaller and smaller, it is getting more difficult to keep old customers and find out new ones. For decades now building brand loyalty has been propounded as the panacea for all organizations to combat the increasing competition in the market place. Kotler and Keller (2005) indicated that "based on a 20-80 principle, the top 20% of customers may create 80% of profit for a company." Thus, the longer relationship between a company and its customers may create more profit and benefit for the company. Studies have shown that small reductions in customer defections can produce significant increase in profits because:

- Loyal customers buy more products.
- Loyal customers are less-price sensitive and pay less attention to competitors' advertising.
- Servicing existing customers, who are familiar with the firm's offerings and processes, is cheaper.
- Loyal customers spread positive word-of-mouth and refer other customers (Reichheld and Sasser, 1990).

Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) utilized action loyalty and affective loyalty to measure brand loyalty and applied a seven-point Likert scale for measurement. Huang (2004) adopted Aaker's (1996) brand loyalty measure index to measure brand loyalty, identified the items related to attitude and behavior measurement and used a five-point Likert scale as measure tool.

Relationship of variables

Relationship of personality trait and brand personality

Chow *et al.* (2004) conducted a study on college students' sports shoes buying behavior in an attempt to find if there is a significant correlation between personality trait and brand personality. By classifying the brands into the ones preferred by college students and the ones actually being purchased recently, the research found that the college students of different personality traits shows significant difference in the preference of brand personality. Chow *et al.* (2004) also explored if there is a significant difference in the influence of brand personality when the consumers of different personality traits made their purchase decisions. The result shows that the consumers with higher scores in extroversion and openness are more likely to be influenced by brand personality.

Govers and Schoormans (2005) further probed whether consumers' preference would be influenced when their self-concept is in conformity with product personality. The result shows that consumers have preference for the products having a high degree of congruence between their own self-concept and product personality. Guo (2003) investigated if there is a significant correlation between personality trait and brand personality according to the scores of the five dimensions of the Big Five Model. The result shows that all five dimensions of the Big Five Model have significant positive relationship with the cognition of brand personality.

Relationship of brand personality and brand loyalty

Mengxia (2007) investigated the influence of brand personality on consumers' brand preference, affection, loyalty and purchasing intention. The result shows that

brand personality has a positive influence on brand preference, affection, loyalty and purchase intention. Guo (2003) also explored if brand personality has significant influence on brand preference. The result shows that the interviewees scored higher scores on the cognition of some brand personalities in the brands they prefer. It might be that consumers like the brands having more distinct brand personality, and it is also likely that consumers are more familiar with the brands they prefer.

Kumar *et al.* (2006) investigated the connection between brand personality and brand loyalty, and separately used durable goods (cars), and consumer goods (tooth-pastes) to explore the relationship between brand personality and brand loyalty. The result shows that brand personality may influence consumers' brand loyalty to consumable goods.

Relationship of personality trait and brand loyalty

Matzler *et al.* (2006) investigated the relationships among the personality traits of openness and extroversion, hedonic value, brand affection and brand loyalty. The result shows that openness and extroversion have positive correlation on the loyalty of the brands or products with hedonic value.

Methodology

Conceptual structure

The Big Five Model proposed by Costa and McCrae (1985) is broadly adopted by personality psychologists to measure personality traits, which is composed of extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness. This study refers to the big five personality traits proposed by Costa and McCrae (1985) to measure respondents' personality traits. Many marketing researchers widely use brand personality scale with high reliability and validity to measure respondent's brand personality. Given the intention to investigate Japanese brands, this study refers to the Japanese brand personality scale modified by Aaker *et al.* (2001) based on the US brand personality scale to measure brand personality.

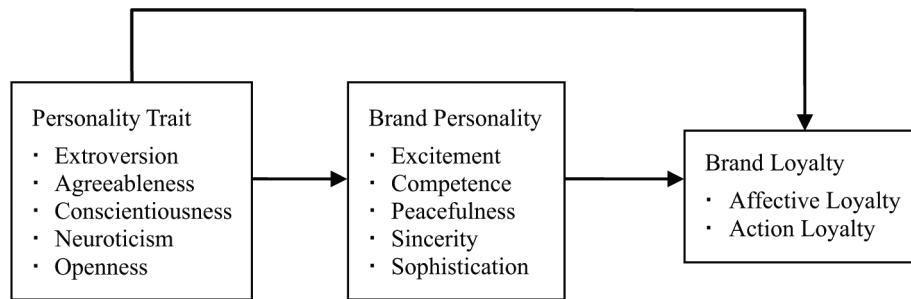
In the aspect of brand loyalty, it is divided into affective loyalty and action loyalty. Affective loyalty measures the consumers' overall feelings about products and brands as well as their purchase intention while action loyalty puts more focus on the response to the stimulation of sales promotions, which represents the purchase intention for a product or brand (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2000). Many researchers emphasize that affective loyalty and action loyalty should be simultaneously measured in order to identify consumers' real brand loyalty (Baldinger and Rubinson, 1996; Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001). Thus, by referring to the study of Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001), this research uses action loyalty and affective loyalty to measure brand loyalty.

This study refers to the literatures mentioned above to develop its conceptual structure as shown in Figure 2.

Hypotheses development

As indicated by Aaker (1997) that there are three dimensions in brand personality is relating to the Big Five Model. The three dimensions are: agreeableness versus sincerity, extroversion versus excitement and conscientiousness versus competence. Agreeableness and sincerity are the thoughts coming from warmth and acceptance. Extroversion and excitement cover social communication, activity and action

Figure 2 Conceptual structure



concepts. Conscientiousness and competence include responsibility, reliability and assurance. The research conducted by Chow *et al.* (2004) first found that the college students with different personality traits show significant difference from brand personality when purchasing sports shoe; second, it also found significant difference in the influence of different personality trait groups on brand personalities. Sirgy (1982) and Aaker (1999) both believed that consumers brand preference and brand's symbolization are consistent with consumers' self-concept, and in the meantime, consumers may increase their preference for the products having congruence in corporate image and brand personality. Guo (2003) took symbolic (watch), practical (microwave) and comprehensive (car) products to examine whether personality traits have a significant relationship with brand personality cognizance. The research result found the five big personality traits all have significant positive relationships to brand personality cognizance. Hence, the first hypothesis of this study is developed as below:

H1. There is a significant positive relationship between personality trait (extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness) and brand personality (excitement, competence, sincerity).

The research conducted by Guo (2003) found that the respondents got higher scores on the cognition of some brand personalities of the brand they prefer. It illustrates that consumers have more preference for the brands having distinct brand personality, but it is also likely that consumers are more familiar with the brands they prefer. Mengxia (2007) reported that brand personality has positive influence on brand preference, affection, loyalty and purchase intention. Chen (1998) also discovered that more distinct brand personality may bring stronger brand loyalty. Thus, the second hypotheses of this study is developed as below.

H2. Brand personality) has a significant positive influence on brand loyalty.

Matzler *et al.* (2006) used hedonic product like sports shoes and mobile phones to investigate the relationships among the personality traits of openness and extraversion, hedonic value, brand affection and brand loyalty. The result shows that openness and extroversion have a positive influence on the loyalty to the brands or products with hedonistic value. According to the study conducted by Schiffman and Kanuk (2000), a person's personality is mainly consisted of his or her behavior, appearance, affections, conviction and personality statistic features. Massad (1996) asserted that young females

have higher risk tendency than young males, but they have lower loyalty. Farley (1964) perceived that high-income has strong correlation with brand loyalty. Thus, the third hypothesis of the study is developed as below.

H3. Personality trait has a significant positive influence on brand loyalty.

Variable definition and measurement

Personality trait

By referring to Costa and McCrae (1985), this study defines personality traits as the degrees that consumers think of themselves in terms of extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness. Extraversion assesses an individual's quantity and intensity of interpersonal interaction and activity level. The higher scorers tend to be sociable, active, talkative, person-oriented, optimistic and affectionate. Agreeableness assesses an individual's quality of interpersonal orientation along a continuum from compassion to antagonism in thoughts, feelings, and actions. The higher scorers are likely to be soft-hearted, good-natured, trusting, helpful, forgiving, gullible, and straightforward. Conscientious assesses one's degree of organization, persistence, and motivation in goal-directed behavior. The higher scorers of this dimension tend to be organized, reliable, and hard working. Neuroticism assesses an individual prone to psychological distress, unrealistic ideas, excessive cravings or urges, and maladaptive coping responses. The higher scorers tend to be worried, nervous, emotional, and hypochondriacal. Openness assesses an individual's proactive seeking and appreciation of experience for its own sake, toleration for, and exploration of the unfamiliar. The higher scorers tend to be curious, creative, original, imaginative, and untraditional. The study also refers to the method developed by Chow (2004) for measuring the degree of personality traits in respective dimensions. In addition, a seven-point Likert scale is also used to measure the degree of consumers' agreement, in which consumers are requested to fill in their agreement level from one point to seven points as designed to identify their personality traits.

Brand personality

The target of this study is BANDAI brand Japanese toys and video games. The viewpoints of Aaker *et al.* (2001) are taken into account and brand personality is defined as the degree to which consumers consider "the personality traits" of a specific toy or video game brand in terms of: excitement, competence, peacefulness, sincerity and sophistication. Excitement is defined as the degree of talkativeness, freedom, happiness

and energy shown in a brand's personality trait; Competence is defined as the degree of responsibility, determination and patience in a brand's personality trait; Peacefulness is defined as the degree of mildness and naivety in a brand's personality trait; Sincerity is defined as the degree of warmth in a brand's personality trait; and Sophistication is defined as the degree of elegance and style in a brand's personality trait. This study refers to the method developed by Aaker *et al.* (2001) to measure the degree of brand personality in respective dimensions. In addition, a seven-point Likert scale is also used, in which the respondents are requested to fill in their agreement level, in order to measure brand personality.

Brand loyalty

By referring to Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001), the study defines brand loyalty as the positive and aggressive degree shown by consumers for their affective loyalty and action loyalty toward a toy or video game brand. Affective loyalty is defined as the degree of preference and affinity consumers have toward a brand. Action loyalty is defined as the degree of actual repeated purchases of a brand made by consumers. This study uses the method developed by Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) to measure consumer's affective loyalty and action loyalty. The respondents were requested to fill in their agreement level on a seven-point Likert scale to measure brand loyalty.

Sampling design

Targeting the adult consumers who were visiting or purchasing toys or video games as the research objects, this study conducted a sampling survey at Taipei City Mall of Taipei Main Station. The main reason to choose Taipei City Mall as the survey location is because there are plenty of toys and video game stores in that area, which has brought about great business opportunities and heavy pedestrian traffic. The personality traits in mature adults tend to be highly stable. Hence those mature adults are the most suitable targets to be surveyed.

BANDAI is Japan's No. 1 toy manufacturer and the third largest company in Japan's video game industry. BANDAI has established a branch office in Taiwan since 2003, and all Taiwanese consumers of toys and video games are familiar with the brand and therefore this study uses BANDAI as the research brand.

This study adopted a convenience sampling method to collect primary data, in which the interviewer interviewed the adult consumers who came to the Taipei City Mall of Taipei Main Station to shop for toys or video games. The interviews conducted by the researcher in person and the responded questionnaires were turned in on the spot. This way, when the respondents ran into questions that they had difficulty answering, the researcher would be available on the spot to help them, so that the return rate and accuracy of the questionnaire could be enhanced. In order to increase the effectiveness and representativeness of the questionnaire, the study distributed a total of 400 questionnaires.

Questionnaire design

According to the objectives of this study and research variables, as well as different dimensions in the conceptual structure, the questionnaire was organized into four parts: personality traits, brand personality, brand loyalty and the respondent's basic information. In terms of personality traits,

this study uses the Big Five Model scale: extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness, developed by McCrae *et al.* (1986), together with the questionnaire designed by Chow (2004) Regarding brand personality, Aaker *et al.* (2001) divided Japanese brand personality into five dimensions: excitement, competence, peacefulness, sincerity and sophistication. This study uses the Japanese brand personality scale proposed by Aaker *et al.* (2001) and refers to the questionnaire designed by Aaker *et al.* (2001) to design the questionnaire of personality traits.

For brand loyalty, this study refers to the two major dimensions of brand loyalty proposed by Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) and the questionnaires designed by Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001), Parasuraman *et al.* (1996) and Aaker (1996) to measure consumers' brand loyalty toward toy and video game brands, respectively, in terms of affective loyalty and action loyalty. As for respondents' basic information, the respondents are requested to fill in their gender, age, education level, occupation, income and marital status in the questionnaire.

The pre-test of the questionnaire targeted the consumers browsing for or purchasing toys or video games at Taipei City Mall of Taipei Main Station, in order to make sure that the reliability of respective scales would all be in compliance with the research design. A total of 40 samples of the pre-test questionnaire were distributed and 35 validity samples were collected. The pre-test result showed that the Cronbach's α value of the respective variables were all above 0.5 which demonstrated that the questionnaire used in this study meets a qualified level of reliability (2004).

Data collection and analysis method

The consumers who shop for toys or video games may be more aware of the brand BANDAI and would have more experience with and greater preference for toys and video games. This study conducted its questionnaire survey within the vicinity of toy and video game stores. When scouting the toy or video game stores for survey location, it was found that more toys or video games are sold at Taipei City Mall, and the place also has heavy pedestrian traffic. Thus, this study conducted its questionnaire survey at Taipei City Mall. In order to reinforce the coverage of the questionnaire survey, the survey was conducted during three different time period: noon, afternoon and twilight. The data collected in the survey were analyzed and compared using SPSS10.0 version of statistic package software. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the sample's basic information. Then the reliability as well as the validity of the questionnaire was verified. Also, correlation analysis was used to examine the correlation of the variables of dimensions. Finally the regression analysis was adopted to test the hypotheses.

Data analysis

Sample description

A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed for this study, and 387 valid questionnaires were collected, which represents a valid return rate of 96.75 per cent. As shown by the valid samples, the proportion of male toy and video game consumers (74 per cent) is higher than that of their female counterparts (26 per cent), their ages are mostly in the ranged

between 21–30 years old (60 per cent), followed by the below 20 years old age group (31 per cent). Also 53 per cent of the respondents were college graduates while student made up the vast majority (65 per cent) of interviews in terms of occupation. In addition, 71 per cent of the respondents' monthly income was below \$20,000 and 96 per cent of the respondents were single.

Reliability and validity analysis

Reliability is a measuring tool contains a level of variable error. Cronbach's α values are commonly used to measure the degree of consistence of various facets in the same dimension. The questionnaire includes a variety of dimensions, and a higher reliability coefficient represents a higher correlation of respective dimensions, which illustrates higher internal consistence. When Cronbach's α value is greater than 0.7, it is referred to as high reliability; when the value falls between 0.7 and 0.35, it is considered as fair reliability, and the value smaller than 0.35 is taken as low reliability. The results of the questionnaire reliability analysis show that the Cronbach's α value of the personality trait is 0.7662, brand personality is 0.8232 and brand loyalty is 0.7350. Given its variables all reaching a level of high reliability, it illustrates that the overall consistence of the questionnaire of this study is in high reliability.

To show how valid a questionnaire is, it is necessary to measure variable characteristics (Chow, 2004). Since the questionnaire is designed by referring to the research scales developed by the researchers within and without, and modified by reviewing various kinds of literature, it would meet the requirement of content validity. If factor in facet measurement is between 0.5 and 1.0, the values of respective dimensions are all greater than 1, and the accumulated explained variances of respective variables are all greater than 50 per cent, the overall measurement quality of the questionnaire is good and the questions in the questionnaire are appropriate, then the questionnaire has construct validity (Chiou, 2000). According to the factor analysis, the study shows that the values of its respective dimensions are all greater than 1, each facet's factor loading is between 0.500 and 0.861, and accumulated explained variances are all greater than 50 per cent. It illustrates that the questionnaire used in this study meet the requirement of construct validity.

Correlation analysis

This study uses Pearson's correlation analysis to confirm the correlation of two dimensions and the correlation coefficients of respective variables as shown in Table I. As the data shown in Table I, extroversion and excitement, agreeableness and sincerity, conscientiousness and competence, those are significant positive correlation, each dimension of brand personality and brand royalty shows significant positive correlation, extroversion for affective loyalty, agreeableness for brand loyalty, openness for brand loyalty are significant positive correlation, neuroticism for brand royalty shows significant negative correlation.

Hypotheses testing

The relationship of personality trait (extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness) and brand personality (excitement, competence, sincerity)

The regression analysis was adopted to test the relationship of personality trait (extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness) and brand personality with excitement. The results of the regression analysis were shown as Table II. From data shown in Model 1 of Table II, $\beta = 0.126$, $t = 2.018$, $p = 0.056 < 0.10$, which has a statistical significance, it means extroversion and brand personality with excitement have a significant positive relationship was supported. $\beta = 0.136$, $t = 2.196$, $p = 0.033 < 0.05$, which has a statistical significance, it means agreeableness and brand personality with excitement have a significant positive relationship was supported as well. $\beta = 0.047$, $t = 0.734$, $p = 0.464 > 0.10$, which does not has a statistical significance, it means conscientiousness have a significant positive correlation was not supported.

From data shown in Model 2 of Table II, $\beta = 0.117$, $t = 1.856$, $p = 0.064 < 0.10$, which has a statistical significance, it means agreeableness and brand personality with competence have a significant positive relationship was supported. As for the rest of 2 personality traits, which were not supported for the positive relationship with brand personality with competences.

And as data shown in Model 3 of Table II, $\beta = 0.149$, $t = 2.359$, $p = 0.019 < 0.05$, which has a statistical significance, it means agreeableness and brand personality with sincerity have a significant positive relationship was supported. As for the rest of 2 personality traits, which were not supported for the positive relationship with brand personality with sincerity.

According to the test results, *H1* is partly supported.

The influence of brand personality on affective loyalty

The regression analysis for the influence of brand personality on affective loyalty was shown as Table III. $\beta = 0.112$, $t = 2.042$, $p = 0.042 < 0.05$, which has a statistical significance, it means that brand personality with competence have a significant positive influence on affective loyalty was supported. $\beta = 0.258$, $t = 4.757$, $p = 0.000 < 0.01$, which has a statistical significance, it means brand personality with sophistication have a significant positive influence on affective loyalty was supported. As for the rest of 3 brand personality traits, which were not supported for the positive influence on brand affective loyalty.

The influence of brand personality on action loyalty

The regression analysis for the influence of brand personality on action royalty was shown as Table IV. $\beta = 0.199$, $t = 3.708$, $p = 0.000 < 0.01$, which has reach a statistical significance, it means brand personality with competence have a significant positive influence on action loyalty was supported. $\beta = 0.109$, $t = 1.836$, $p = 0.067 < 0.1$, which has reach a statistical significance, it means brand personality with peacefulness have a significant positive influence on action loyalty was supported. $\beta = 0.096$, $t = 1.816$, $p = 0.070 < 0.1$, which has reach a statistical significance, it means that brand personality with sophistication have a significant positive influence on action loyalty was supported. As for the rest of 2 brands personality,

Table I Pearson correlation analysis

| Variables | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------|
| 1. Extroversion | 1.000 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Agreeableness | 0.516** (0.000) | 1.000 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. Conscientiousness | 0.565** (0.000) | 0.546** (0.000) | 1.000 | | | | | | | | | |
| 4. Neuroticism | -0.364** (0.000) | -0.348** (0.000) | -0.270** (0.000) | 1.000 | | | | | | | | |
| 5. Openness | 0.459** (0.000) | 0.393** (0.000) | 0.400** (0.000) | -0.218** (0.000) | 1.000 | | | | | | | |
| 6. Excitement | 0.223** (0.000) | 0.227** (0.000) | 0.193** (0.000) | -0.106* (0.036) | 0.127* (0.012) | 1.000 | | | | | | |
| 7. Competence | 0.160** (0.002) | 0.174** (0.001) | 0.136** (0.000) | -0.113* (0.026) | 0.080 (0.115) | 0.428** (0.000) | 1.000 | | | | | |
| 8. Peacefulness | 0.096 (0.060) | 0.071 (0.166) | 0.004 (0.932) | 0.048 (0.345) | -0.003 (0.960) | 0.384** (0.000) | 0.294** (0.000) | 1.000 | | | | |
| 9. Sincerity | 0.073 (0.153) | 0.121* (0.017) | 0.010 (0.838) | -0.038 (0.456) | 0.105* (0.039) | 0.481** (0.000) | 0.355** (0.000) | 0.542** (0.000) | 1.000 | | | |
| 10. Sophistication | 0.095 (0.063) | 0.028 (0.585) | 0.057 (0.265) | -0.038 (0.462) | -0.045 (0.380) | 0.227** (0.000) | 0.293** (0.000) | 0.429** (0.000) | 0.332** (0.000) | 1.000 | | |
| 11. Affective loyalty | 0.065 (0.204) | 0.153** (0.003) | 0.026 (0.615) | -0.171** (0.001) | 0.123* (0.016) | 0.190** (0.000) | 0.227** (0.000) | 0.140** (0.006) | 0.207** (0.000) | 0.303** (0.000) | 1.000 | |
| 12. Action loyalty | 0.150** (0.003) | 0.200** (0.000) | 0.094 (0.064) | -0.138** (0.006) | 0.184** (0.000) | 0.276** (0.000) | 0.326** (0.000) | 0.287** (0.000) | 0.286** (0.000) | 0.248** (0.000) | 0.458** (0.000) | 1.000 |

Notes: Figures in parentheses represent *p* value; **p* ≤ 0.05; ***p* ≤ 0.01

Table II The regression analysis for the relationship of personality traits (extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness) and brand personality (excitement, competence, sincerity)

| Model/dependent variable | Independent variable | β | <i>t</i> -value | <i>p</i> -value | Model significance |
|--------------------------|----------------------|---------|-----------------|-----------------|---|
| Model 1 Excitement | Extroversion | 0.126 | 2.018 | 0.056* | $R^2 = 0.068$ $\bar{R}^2 = 0.061$ D-W = 2.113 F = 9.314 <i>p</i> = 0.000*** |
| | Agreeableness | 0.136 | 2.196 | 0.033** | |
| | Conscientiousness | 0.047 | 0.734 | 0.464 | |
| Model 2 Competence | Extroversion | 0.087 | 1.358 | 0.175 | $R^2 = 0.037$ $\bar{R}^2 = 0.030$ D-W = 2.115 F = 4.959 <i>p</i> = 0.002*** |
| | Agreeableness | 0.117 | 1.856 | 0.064* | |
| | Conscientiousness | 0.024 | 0.365 | 0.716 | |
| Model 3 Sincerity | Extroversion | 0.053 | 0.819 | 0.413 | $R^2 = 0.021$ $\bar{R}^2 = 0.013$ D-W = 1.841 F = 2.724 <i>p</i> = 0.044** |
| | Agreeableness | 0.149 | 2.359 | 0.019** | |
| | Conscientiousness | -0.101 | -1.535 | 0.126 | |

Notes: **p* ≤ 0.10; ***p* ≤ 0.05; ****p* ≤ 0.01

Table III The regression analysis for the influence of brand personality on affective loyalty

| Dependent variable | Independent variable | β | <i>t</i> -value | <i>p</i> -value |
|--------------------|----------------------|---------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Affective loyalty | Excitement | 0.071 | 1.215 | 0.225 |
| | Competence | 0.112 | 2.042 | 0.042** |
| | Peacefulness | -0.080 | -1.315 | 0.189 |
| | Sincerity | 0.091 | 1.467 | 0.143 |
| | Sophistication | 0.258 | 4.757 | 0.000*** |

Notes: **p* ≤ 0.05; ***p* ≤ 0.01; ****p* ≤ 0.01; $R^2 = 0.125$, $\bar{R}^2 = 0.113$, D-W = 1.793, F = 10.861, *p* = 0.000

Table IV The regression analysis for the influence of brand personality on action royalty

| Dependent variable | Independent variable | β | <i>t</i> -value | <i>p</i> -value |
|--------------------|----------------------|---------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Action royalty | Excitement | 0.088 | 1.555 | 0.121 |
| | Competence | 0.199 | 3.708 | 0.000** |
| | Peacefulness | 0.109 | 1.836 | 0.067* |
| | Sincerity | 0.082 | 1.361 | 0.174 |
| | Sophistication | 0.096 | 1.861 | 0.070* |

Notes: **p* ≤ 0.10; ***p* ≤ 0.01; $R^2 = 0.168$; $\bar{R}^2 = 0.157$; D-W = 1.905; F = 15.339; *p* = 0.000;

which were not supported for the positive influence on brand action loyalty.

Thus, according to the results of above test, *H2* is partly supported.

The relationship of personality trait and affective loyalty

The regression analysis for the relationship of personality trait and affective loyalty was shown as Table V. $\beta = 0.147$, $t = 2.287$, $p = 0.042 < 0.05$, which has reach a statistical significance, it means that agreeableness have a significant positive influence on affective loyalty was supported. $\beta = 0.098$, $t = 1.698$, $p = 0.090 < 0.1$, which has reach a statistical significance, it means openness have a significant positive correlation with affective loyalty was supported. $\beta = -0.145$, $t = -2.655$, $p = 0.008 < 0.01$, though which has reach a statistical significance, but t -value is negative, it means neuroticism have a significant positive influence on affective loyalty was not supported. As for the rest of 2 personality traits, which were not supported for the positive influence on brand affective loyalty.

The relationship of personality trait and action loyalty

The regression analysis for the relationship of personality trait and action loyalty was shown as Table VI. $\beta = 0.152$, $t = 2.377$, $p = 0.018 < 0.05$, which has reach a statistical significance, it means that agreeableness have a significant positive influence on action loyalty was supported. $\beta = 0.124$, $t = 2.157$, $p = 0.032 < 0.05$, which has reach a statistical significance, it means that openness have a significant positive influence on action loyalty was supported. As for the rest of 3 personality traits, which were not supported for the positive influence on brand action loyalty.

According to the results of tests, *H3* is partly supported.

Table V The regression analysis for the influence of personality trait on affective loyalty

| Dependent variable | Independent variable | | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|---------|------------|------------|
| | | β | t -value | p -value |
| Affective loyalty | Extroversion | -0.050 | -0.741 | 0.225 |
| | Agreeableness | 0.147 | 2.287 | 0.042 ** |
| | Conscientiousness | -0.105 | -1.606 | 0.189 |
| | Neuroticism | -0.145 | -2.655 | 0.008 *** |
| | Openness | 0.098 | 1.698 | 0.090 * |

Notes: * $p \leq 0.10$; ** $p \leq 0.05$; *** $p \leq 0.01$; $R^2 = 0.053$, $\bar{R}^2 = 0.041$, $D-W = 1.763$, $F = 4.299$, $p = 0.001$

Table VI The regression analysis for the influence of personality trait on action loyalty

| Dependent variable | Independent variable | | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|---------|------------|------------|
| | | β | t -value | p -value |
| Action loyalty | Extroversion | 0.033 | 0.492 | 0.623 |
| | Agreeableness | 0.152 | 2.377 | 0.018 * |
| | Conscientiousness | -0.075 | -1.156 | 0.248 |
| | Neuroticism | -0.067 | -1.238 | 0.217 |
| | Openness | 0.124 | 2.157 | 0.032 * |

Notes: * $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; $R^2 = 0.060$, $\bar{R}^2 = 0.048$, $D-W = 1.891$, $F = 4.896$, $p = 0.001$

Discussion

The positive relationship of personality trait (extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness) and brand personality (excitement, competence, sincerity) is partly supported

The findings of this study are not exactly in line with Aaker's (1997) viewpoints. The "conscientiousness" personality trait does not have positive relationship with the "competence" dimension of brand personality. However, consumers with different personality traits have different feelings toward BANDAI, for example, consumers tend to extroversion, agreeableness and neuroticism have slightly differences on the cognizance for the brand personality of BANDAI. This finding is consistent with the results found by Guo (2003). Besides, conscientiousness and openness personality traits do not have a positive relationship with brand personality. It is probable that consumers with a higher degree of conscientiousness and openness do not know the brand personality of BANDAI clearly, or probably BANDAI well enough, or maybe BANDAI does not have well-rounded marketing strategies or invest enough in advertisements in Taiwan so that the positive relationship between personality trait and brand personality is not completely supported.

The positive influence of brand personality on affective loyalty is partly supported

A successful brand requires the building of distinct brand personality, and has to be markedly different from other brands to make consumers notice its brand personality and form strong relationship with the brand (Doyle, 1990; Kumar *et al.*, 2006). Dick and Basu (1994) pointed out that only highly related brand loyal attitude and re-purchase behavior could be regarded as brand royalty. The hypothesis that excitement, peacefulness and sincerity brand personality dimensions have a significant positive correlation with affective royalty has not been fully supported. It was probably due to the fact that, in an effort to differentiate from other brands, BANDAI emphasizes competence and sophistication and pay less attentions on excitement, peacefulness and sincerity, which makes consumers consider BANDAI superior in terms of competence and sophistication, and not so in terms of excitement, peacefulness and sincerity, which in turn leads to the result that the positive relationship between brand personality and brand loyalty is not completely supported.

The positive influence of personality trait on brand loyalty is partly supported

The hypothesis that the personality trait of extroversion has a significant positive influence on affective loyalty has not been fully supported. It is probably because consumers who scored higher on extroversion prefer to interact with people and frequently attend outdoor activities and therefore they do not get involved as much with toys or video games and hence the low brand royalty.

And the hypothesis that the personality trait of conscientiousness has a significant positive influence on affective loyalty has not been fully supported. It is probably because consumers who scored higher on conscientiousness pay more attentions to achievements in terms on studies and careers (Costa and McCrae, 1985) and do not get much involved in entertainments. The hypothesis that the personality trait of neuroticism has a significant positive influence on affective loyalty has not been fully supported,

probably because consumers who has higher degree of neuroticism usually have excessive desires and impulses (Costa and McCrae, 1985), therefore, when purchasing toys or video games, their behavior belong to impulsive purchases or only have strong desires for the products without producing loyalty to brand.

As indicated in the research conducted by Matzler *et al.* (2006), only openness and extroversion personality traits have positive correlation with brand or product loyalty in the hedonic product group. Besides, it is difficult to predict brand preference only with personality trait since personality trait is related to purchasing product categories (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2000).

Conclusion and suggestions

Conclusion

The major findings of this study were listed as follows:

- There is a significantly positive relationship between extroversion personality trait and excitement brand personality.
- There is a significantly positive relationship between agreeableness personality trait and excitement brand personality, sincerity brand personality and competence brand personality.
- Competence and sophistication brand personality have a significantly positive influence on affective loyalty.
- Competence, peacefulness and sophistication brand personality have a significantly positive influence on action loyalty.
- Agreeableness and openness personality trait have a significantly positive influence on affective loyalty.
- Agreeableness and openness personality trait have a significantly positive influence on action loyalty.

Managerial implications

Theoretical implications

This study verifies that consumers with different personality traits will have different cognizance towards brand personality, which can also be applied to the toy and video game industries. Consumers with different personality traits have different cognizance towards brand personality, which represents that consumers with different personality traits will have different positive relationships with different BANDAI's brand personality dimensions. And a successful brand requires the building of a distinct brand personality (Doyle, 1990; Kumar *et al.*, 2006). This shows that BANDAI still has not created a distinct brand personality yet so that consumers with different personality traits have different cognizance toward its brand personality.

This study also found out that BANDAI scored high on brand personality of competence, sophistication and on affective loyalty, which means BANDAI should strengthen its existing brand image so that consumers can have a consistent cognizance of its brand personality, and reinforce the consumers to consider themselves as having a certain relationship with this brand. In doing so, BANDAI can cultivate loyal customers, and it is also an effective way to attract new customers.

To prove a distinct brand personality can appeal to more brand loyalty. The finding in this study is consistent with the viewpoints held by other researchers and empirical study

results (Doyle, 1990; Kumar *et al.*, 2006), and demonstrates that finding the way to shape brand personality is valuable and crucial for the success of a company.

To show that agreeableness and openness of personality traits have a positive influence on brand loyalty. According to a research conducted by Matzler *et al.* (2006), only openness and extroversion of personality traits have a positive influence on brand or product loyalty with hedonic value. This study verified that agreeableness and openness of personality traits can influence true brand loyalty. It showed that consumers with higher degree of agreeableness and openness will develop brand loyalty for hedonic products like toys or video games. This finding is not exactly the same as the result found by Matzler *et al.* (2006). This finding can supplement the partial gap of the literatures.

Practical implications

To highlight the value of brand personality that benefits a company.

Brand personality not only plays an important role, but also has profound influence on a company's performance. By using various marketing approaches, a company may convey their brand personality to consumers and have the consumers of varying personality traits believe and recognize the company's brand personality; thus, consumers may develop some kind of relationship with the brand, which will further influence their brand loyalty. The shaping of distinct brand personality may add value to a company's brand.

Raising the importance of brand loyalty for a company. In fact the brand personality of competence and sophistication can effectively boost customers' true loyalty toward the brand, BANDAI has to emphasize the expressing of excitement, competence and sophistication of the brand personality and keep its brand personality distinct, lasting and consistent to attract customers, and cultivate their preference for the specific brand personality and have them become the company's loyal customers.

Consumers who register in agreeableness and openness are the target audience for BANDAI. This study verified that consumers with higher agreeableness and openness have positive loyalty towards BANDAI, which means BANDAI should take them as the core target audience. All marketing strategies developed should focus on these target consumers' needs. In doing so, BANDAI can keep them and maintain their loyalty.

Research limitations

Even though the study tries to be objective and prudent in its experimental designs and survey methods, it is still restrained by limitations and deviations in its implementation, which results in some imperfections in the end. This study has the following limitations:

- *The restriction on selecting countries and brands.* As opposed to the studies conducted by other researchers using more than two brands for the comparison of brand personalities, this study only investigates one brand, even though it is a major Japanese brand. Thus, it requires further investigation if planning to apply the study results to other toy or video game brands.
- *The restraint of the sampling coverage.* The questionnaire survey was only conducted at Taipei City Mall and targeted the adult consumers who shop and purchase toys and video games in that area. However, the viewpoints

from the consumers in other areas of Taiwan or other countries were not covered.

- *Lack of generalization of the study findings.* This study is limited to the toy and video game industry in its empirical study. It is unknown if the results can be applied to other industries. Thus, further investigation is required if planning to apply the results to other industries.

Suggestions

Suggestions for the enterprises

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed for the enterprises as a reference:

- *To create a distinct, lasting and consistent brand personality.* Creation of a distinct brand personality may draw customers' brand loyalty, so when a company plans its marketing activities, it should specifically highlight its brand personality in order to draw brand loyalty from its target consumers.
- *To give attention to customers' insights.* The study found that the conscientiousness of personality trait does not have a significant positive influence on affective and action loyalty. However, with brand personality, conscientiousness of personality trait may yield true loyalty to brands. It illustrates that "BANDAI" should continue to use its favorable brand personality to retain this type of consumer. In addition, it should also try to understand other types of consumers and use other variables to retain them. Other than literally understanding the uniqueness of its own products, BANDAI should conduct a consumer A&U study to understand consumers' personality traits and preferences when planning its marketing activities. In doing so, it can shape the brand personality according to customers' requirements and draw customers' true loyalty to the brand.

Suggestions for future studies

The following recommendations are brought up for those researchers who are interested in conducting subsequent studies in the related field:

- *Change the brands of toys or video games.* The follow-up researchers may select several brands of toys and video games for comparison and investigate of the differences among varying brand personalities.
- *Change research variables.* There are plenty of variables that can induce consumers of varying personality traits to develop loyalty to brands, and each variable has its respective coverage. Also, according to the study, the correlation among various variables is low, which also results in too low an explanation of variance in the regression model. It illustrates that there are other important variables that could influence consumers regarding their brand loyalty to BANDAI. Thus, the researchers doing follow-up research should review other literature to select different variables and dimensions and provide a more integrated investigation.
- *Change the industry to be studied in new research.* This study only gives an empirical analysis on the toy and video game industry, but the researchers doing follow-up research may apply the model to other industries for further verification, so the model can be readily adapted to other applications.

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Corresponding author

Long-Yi Lin can be contacted at: longyi@ms12.url.com.tw

Executive summary and implications for managers and executives

This summary has been provided to allow managers and executives a rapid appreciation of the content of this article. Those with a particular interest in the topic covered may then read the article in toto to take advantage of the more comprehensive description of the research undertaken and its results to get the full benefits of the material present.

That certain brands boast a unique personality is cited as a key factor in their success. A personality that is consistent and enduring helps consumers better engage with the brand in

question and this effect is considerably enhanced when brand personality is clearly differentiated from rival offerings.

Key variables

Brand personality emerges as a result of consumer associations with the brand, company efforts to project a certain image through advertising and communication, and from the brand's attributes. Plenty evidence exists to substantiate beliefs that consumers prefer brands that more closely match their own self-concept, whether real or ideal. Some scholars have also discovered that human and brand personality can mutually reinforce each other. Marlboro's successful use of macho cowboys to target males with its cigarette brand is one example of such an outcome.

Seminal work in 1997 led to the creation of a brand personality measurement scale consisting of five dimensions incorporating a total of 15 facets and 42 traits. The dimensions were classified as sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness. Later modification for the Japanese market took culture into account and peacefulness replaced ruggedness in a revised scale containing 12 facets and 36 traits.

Studies into personality traits have origins in psychology and theory is broadly divided into two schools of thought. One purports that everyone has the same traits but differ by degree, while trait combinations that vary from person to person forms the basis of the other position. Researchers have likewise disagreed on the number of trait categories, with different frameworks featuring two, three or five. Extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness were identified as factors that have become known as the Big Five Model. Although slight variations have since emerged, the model has become a standard for research in this area.

With markets becoming increasingly more competitive, organizations are further recognizing the value of having customers who are loyal to their brands. Loyal customers can generate extra revenue and profit, are less price sensitive and more likely to ignore competitor advertising. In addition, it is more expensive to attract new customers than to retain existing ones, who provide added benefits in the shape of referrals and positive word-of-mouth recommendations. Various interpretations of brand loyalty are in existence. Most analysts initially measured loyalty solely through repurchase behavior but consideration of other factors led to more complex definitions. A growing number of scholars subscribed to the belief that attitude provides a truer reflection of loyalty and the term "affective loyalty" was coined to reflect "psychological and affective commitments" to a brand. Certain models have introduced additional classifications but models incorporating both affective loyalty and behavioral or "action" loyalty have become the norm.

Different studies investigating the relationship between these variables have discovered:

- Brand preference is substantially influenced by personality traits.
- Consumers rating high in openness and extraversion are more likely to be influenced by brand personality.
- A significant degree of congruence between brand personality and consumer self-concept.

- Evidence that brand personality positively impacts on brand preference, affective loyalty, action loyalty and purchase intention.
- Loyalty towards brands with "hedonic value" is positively influenced by openness and extraversion.

Brand personality has been studied extensively in recent years within a wide variety of contexts. However, research involving toy and video game brands is scant. The two are closely related through links to cartoons or movies and are major industries in Japan and its main export markets such as Taiwan. Analysts have noted that a growing number of older adults are now consuming such products and suggest that marketers need to target this growing segment as a matter of priority.

Study and results

Lin explores the above issues in a study of Taiwanese consumers from a shopping mall in Taipei. The location was chosen because of its volume of toy shops and video game stores and the number of adult visitors to these establishments. Adult consumers were targeted specifically because "highly stable" personality traits are common among this segment.

A questionnaire was distributed and the author obtained 387 usable responses. The four-part questionnaire related to personality traits, brand personality, brand loyalty and demographic details of the participants. BANDAI was the selected brand for this study because it has been established in Taiwan since 2003 and is a familiar name among toys and video game consumers in the country. Males accounted for 74 percent of the sample and females 26 percent. The vast majority of respondents were adults aged 30 or below.

The study used the Big Five Model, the modified brand personality scale and brand loyalty incorporated both affective loyalty and action loyalty. Findings indicated partial support for:

- Positive relations between the personality traits extroversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness and brand personality dimensions excitement, competence and sincerity.
- Positive influence of brand personality on affective loyalty.
- Positive influence of personality trait on brand loyalty.

Explanations offered by Lin for these findings include:

- A possibility that consumers scoring high in openness and conscientiousness are not fully aware of the brand personality of BANDAI. This potentially raises questions about the company's marketing strategy in Taiwan.
- Differentiation objectives may have resulted in BANDAI placing more emphasis on competence and sophistication at the expense of sincerity, peacefulness and excitement. Consumers are thus likely to rate the brand superior in some personality respects but not in others.
- Brand loyalty will be lower among consumers who value extraversion as such consumers are likelier to engage in outdoor activities rather than playing with toys or video games.
- Consumers scoring highly in conscientiousness may be driven by study and career objective and have little interest in entertainments.

- Impulsiveness is common among consumers indicating a high score in neuroticism. Since this trait can trigger strong urges for random products, brand loyalty is highly improbable.

Marketing implications and further study

Based on this analysis, the author believes that BANDAI has not yet created a distinct brand image and cites that as the reason why consumers with different personality traits have different perception of the brand's personality. It is therefore recommended that the company adopts a variety of marketing approaches and focus on specific dimensions. That way, brand personality can be conveyed more effectively to eliminate this recognition disparity and add value to the brand.

The indication that competence and sophistication can positively impact on "true loyalty" towards the brand prompts Lin to urge BANDAI to focus on these brand personality traits, along with sophistication. Loyalty towards the company

was particularly evident among consumers high in openness and agreeableness. In the author's opinion, these consumers should be regarded as the core target audience. Retention and loyalty are plausible rewards for addressing the needs of these consumers. Another idea is for BANDAI to acquire a better understanding of consumer personality traits so that brand personality can be shaped accordingly.

Additional research could include more than one brand and also expand the study within Taiwan or to different nations. A consideration of additional brands or industries can likewise help indicate whether or not any generalization of findings here is possible.

(A précis of the article "The relationship of consumer personality trait, brand personality and brand loyalty: an empirical study of toys and video gamesbuyers". Supplied by Marketing Consultants for Emerald.)