Re-assessing of the Brand Personality Scale for Three Brands in Iran's Market

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Abstract

This research has empirically measured three brands’ (SAMAND, LG and NIVEA) personality dimensions by the use of Aaker’s (1997) Brand Personality Scale. The study has been conducted in different shopping and public places of Tehran. We have applied SEM and CFA via employing AMOS v16 and several absolute, incremental, and parsimonious indices have been checked to see into the fit of the famous personality model first proposed by Jennifer Aaker (1997). The results of data analysis shows that ‘ruggedness’ dimension of the original model is not valid nor reliable for the SAMAND and NIVEA brands and has week relations with the main construct of brand personality and Each of the three refined models had different numbers of sub-factors. The results also showed LG and NIVEA have four personality dimensions of sincerity, excitement, sophistication and competence and SAMAND’s personality dimensions are sincerity, competence and ruggedness. Finally after the conclusion and discussion part we have provided suggestions for the future research.

Keywords: Brand, Brand Personality, Confirmatory Factor Analysis, Big Five
Introduction

From the viewpoint of product symbolism and symbolic meanings, which consumers usually relate to brands, the brand personality concept can be a great help to understand this behavioral complexity (Austin, 2003). Although the concept of brand personality is old enough to be somehow threadbare, but there is still emerging interests in marketing academics and practitioners that how brand personality arises self-expression and can be used in product differentiation (Freling, 2005).

Creating meaningful differentiation is a vital need in each and every market therefore companies try to survive by offering symbolic values, which remain in the minds of consumers for the long run. Like researches in personality psychology that struggled to find theoretical frameworks to cluster human’s personality and differentiate people from each other by different personality dimensions, some researches in marketing world has tried to do the same thing with brands. Categorizing the people by their personality is a way of knowing people and their behavior so, from brand management criteria capturing the brands’ personality from consumers mind can lead to better understanding their needs and expectations. Today all the companies try to standard their products and services and this standardization usually contributes to similar offerings which alleviate Brands and their differences in customer’s minds. So companies are in danger of drowning in the world of products and services with the same standard level and brand owners are struggling hard and seeking ways of differentiation. According to consumer researches, brands with strong and positive personalities can lead to numerous benefits like increasing consumer preference, usage, emotions, trust and loyalty and provides a basis for product differentiation (Freling, 2005).

Besides the interests of the concept in brand management field, just a few valid measurement frameworks have been developed and Aaker's (1997) effort is an important attempt to create a reliable, valid and generalizable framework that measures these dimensions. According to Aaker (1997) additional researches are needed to look into the generalizibility of the scale, this research is a respond to that call via measuring the personality of three different brands in different industries in Iran.

This research has empirically measured three brands SAMAND, LG and NIVEA personalities in Iran by using Aaker’s (1997) brand personality scale. These three brands are trying to find a unique position in their competitive market: SAMAND which is an Iranian car brand manufactured by Iran Khodro Company (Domestic brand), LG a Korean electronic appliances company (International brand) and NIVEA well known European cosmetic brand. The first brand is manufactured by the largest car company in Middle East, which has a big market share in Iran. The second one is the market leader in some of its products and has close competition with similar companies in Iran’s market. Finally, the last one is one of the oldest cosmetic brands in Iran that has faced a high competition recently because of the intensity of new entrants.

Research Purpose

In Iran, researches on symbolic values of the brands are not backed by a rich history of research. This research is one of the pioneer researches in this topic. However Brand personality is not totally an unknown concept for Iranian brand owners, but it is mostly been mistaken for the differential elements because the need of differentiation and desired brand image is not neglect able. In domestic brands, which manufactured and created inside Iran, there are always in the danger of emergence of international brands. These new international brands usually gain the
market in a short time and for international brands based on their different levels of price there are always the treat of being forgotten in the mass market especially in the consumer goods like home appliances and cosmetics.

For the car brand industry we chose Samand because this brand is Iran Khodro’s strategic product and is known as national automobile of Iran, but the company is not sure about the image and recently has tried to strengthen its image by manufacturing different types of Samand, which did not gain the predicted market. LG brand sees Iran as a new and potential market and its sales volume has increased hugely in recent years, there are strategies for the future of this brand in Iran but the brand in some products is in a high competition with brands like Samsung or Sony, but the important point here is Asian brands in these series of products are well accepted in Iran. NIVEA is one of the first beauty brands that entered Iran and Iranian customers have lived with this company for years, but in recent years we see the rush of other cosmetic brands with innovative ideas and also we see the fake products with the NIVEA brand on them which has ruined the image. Therefore, the first research question arises here that:

RQ1: What are the underlying dimensions of these brands’ personalities (Samand, LG, and NIVEA) from Iranian consumer’s point of view?

Brand Personality Scale (Aaker, 1997) has been tested in different cultures and different industries (Austin, 1999; Aaker and Benet-Martinez, 2001; Supphellen and Grønhaug, 2003; Rojas-Méndez, 2004; Okazaki, 2004; Venable, 2005; Matzler, 2006; Bosnjak, 2007). Sometimes it showed good model fitness and sometimes the BPS model shown not to be valid. This research aims to study this model’s fit in these three brands and Iran’s context. The main purpose is examining the model fitness and see if the model is a good framework to measure brands in Iran or not. Then the second research question is;

RQ2: How does the Brand Personality Scale fit for all these three brands (Samand, LG and NIVEA) in Iran’s context?

Conceptual Background of Brand Personality

Many researches in different times tried to make a certain frame for what brand is and how it can be managed. Many of them in early years focused on the company as the maker of brand communications by the help of marketing mix programs in two main approaches: economic and identity (Heding et al. 2008). This view has been criticized for being too product-oriented and the lack of intangible aspects like brand essence (Wood 2000). In 1993, a new era emerged which brought different researches in communications and psychology to the management theory by humanistic and individualistic approaches in three clusters: consumer-based, personality and relational approach. This approach continued later based on the cultural and context theories (Heding et al. 2008). the brand management paradigm concerns all these different views and all these different thoughts exist in brand management projects and branding researches, one of the most important approaches that has been considered widely is the personality approach (De chernatony, 1998; Aaker, 1997). So the notion of brand personality which is “the specific set of meanings which describe the “inner” characteristics of a brand and these meanings are constructed by a consumer based on behaviors exhibited by personified brands or brand characters” (Aaker, 1995) has been used widely more than ten years.

From the relationship spectrum, brands and consumers can have different levels of linkages, the personality view covers all attitudes, perspectives, feelings, and views consumers have about a brand (Rajagopal, 2006; Power, 2008; Guthrie, 2007). Because this relationship is a two side action, consumers and brands both have their roles in it, the effects of the customers on the relationship is about self concept theories and the brand side actions go to the personality theories like Big Five (Rajagopal, 2006).

The theories supporting brand personality concept lies in psychology science. Some of these theories are like anthropomorphism theory which is about the idea of relating nonhuman
agent and relating human like characteristics to nonhuman agents (Epley, 2007; Soanes & Stevenson, 2005), self-concept theory which sees self as a multidimensional concept that is responsible for all the behaviors and thoughts of an individual person (Aaker, 1999; Sirgey, 1982) and consumers sometimes use brands to project one of these dimensions, Personality theories which provide different structures of personality and its dimensions to know individuals and judge them based on their personality structure (Goldberg, 1993, Aaker, 1995) and finally Five Factor Model of human personality as a hierarchical organization of personality traits in terms of five basic dimensions: Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness to Experience. Research using both natural language adjectives and theoretically based personality questionnaires supports the comprehensiveness of the model and its applicability across observers and cultures. (McCrae, 1993)

All the researches around the brand personality topic can be categorized in three clusters: First of all is the conceptual level which is mainly about the perception of the people about brands in daily activities. The second one which is relationship approach sees brand as an active member of the relationship and consumers watch this activity during brand behavior. The last domain, which is mainly constructed by Jennifer Aaker (1997), is the way of applying brand personality by the help of core factors identifying personality. (Aaker and Fournier, 1995)

Based on the human personality model (big five) Aaker (1997) found a new five dimensional model in the context of brands named Brand Personality Scale (BPS). Her work was the first step to generate a certain measurement personality model in the context of brand marketing. Aaker (1997) factor analyzes the individual ratings of 40 brands on 114 personality traits by 631 respondents recruited in the United States. The principal components factor analysis resulted in five significant factors. The hypothesis that brands with strong personalities are associated with high levels of usage and preference was tested and supported. The hypothesis that correlations between self-concept and brands used are higher than those between self-concept and brands not used was tested and supported. (Aaker, 1995) The result of the exploratory principal component factor analysis has cleared five distinct personality dimensions: Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication, and Ruggedness. She claims that this model is generalizable across cultures and product categories.

Aaker (1997) suggested that the five dimensions of the BPS were generic and could be used to measure brand personality across product categories and cultures. In line with her suggestions for future research, many researchers have applied her framework through variety of products and countries in two main traits culture and brand. In the cultural trait brand personality structure has been tested across different cultures; western, East Asian cultures for example. In a research conducted in Spain and Japan (Aaker et al. 2001), a set of brand personality with similar meanings to United States research in both cultures had been found like excitement, but other cultural specific dimensions like peacefulness and ruggedness had been also found. Other researches in U.K (Capara, 2001), Russia (Venable, 2005), Chile (Mendez, 2004), Austria (Matzler, 2006), Netherlands (Fennis, 2007) and Germany (Bosnjak, 2008) have tried to measure the personality dimensions of different brands in different product categories.

Research Methodology

In this research, in order to re-examine Aaker’s (1997) brand personality framework, through the usage of quantitative techniques. Literature review as well as interviews by expert is applied to propose a framework for Brand Personality Scale in Iran’s market. In addition, Aaker’s (1997) questionnaire has been used to collect empirical data for the study.

Instrument development

To examine the state of brand Personalities by Iranian consumers, a survey was conducted through set of personality traits, which were adapted from Aaker (1997). These traits were discussed with 12 experts who have rich academic and practical background in the field of Brand
in Iran. By using feedback received from experts, slight modifications have been done and number of questions reduced to 38. These questions were structured in a Likert scale model (1 to 5) from ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree’. Since the scale was originally developed in English, the questionnaire was translated into Persian. The back translation procedure was employed to ensure equivalence between the English and Persian versions of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was first translated into the Persian language by two Persian Americans skilled in both languages. Then, the Persian language attributes were translated back into English by another pair (Sung and Tinkham, 2005). To increase validity and reliability of survey’s data, a pilot study conducted in the sale and marketing department of IranKhodro co, with 25 people (Cooper and Schindler, 2006).

**Sampling**

The method of sampling for this research is cluster sampling in the category of probability sampling methods. Of 1300 distributed questionnaire, the 1100 questionnaire were collected which the number of sample for SAMAND, LG, and NIVEA were 325, 312, and 301 respectively. A copy of the final self-administrator questionnaire with a self-addressed envelope was given to each customer.

**Scale Purification**

In order to test validity of the questionnaire, both substantive and experimental considerations were applied (Ekini and Hosany, 2006) According to Yin (1994), there are tests, which are commonly used to establish the quality of any empirical research, construct validity, content validity, and reliability.

**Content validity of the measurement tool**

Content validity method is used to study the formation ingredients of a measurement tool. This method usually is determined by experts in the proposed study subject. For the current research six experts who were university professors in the marketing research area and had the experience of branding projects in the industry, two Irankhodro managers, and four university professors in psychology, social science and English literature were chosen. Furthermore, Content validity of the survey instrument was established through the adoption of validated instruments by other researches in the literature. Because Aaker’s framework (1997), which is the most famous BPS model, has been adopted and applied many times in different studies, the questionnaire is a kind of rigorous one.

**Construct validity**

Construct validity establish correct operational measures for the concepts which are studied. The construct validity of the brand personality was examined by assessing factor validity, convergent validity, and discriminant validity.

First, factor validity is obtained through factor analysis. In fact, it is crucial to decide if the different metrics of one dimension proposed one characteristic or not. KMO and Bartlett tests are applied to examine suitability of the implementation of factor analysis. The results of KMO test illustrate that the data set is well enough to perform factor analysis because the measure of sample adequacy is more than acceptable level (0.6) (Table1). Likewise, the number of significant Bartlett test is smaller than significant level of 0.05. In addition, factor analysis in Principal Component Analysis method with Varimax rotation indicates that correlation matrix has significant information. Finally, communality table is calculated for all of the questions to test that whether all metrics of each construct can be explained by one factor or not. These process leads to two questions be omitted: item 35 for NIVEA as well as item 9 for SAMAND. Furthermore, Discriminant validity demonstrated if the average extracted variances of both constructs are greater than the squared correlation (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The two recently mentioned kinds of validity are acquired through Confirmatory Factor analysis, which will be
discussed in the next part. Generally, the instrument had a clean pass in all of the three tests, suggesting a strong convergent validity of the research variables.

**Reliability**

Reliability means that if the test is repeated under similar condition, to what extent the findings are similar and reliable (Cooper and Schindler, 2006). The common used method for measuring internal consistency is Cronbach’s alpha. Roha et al. (2005) have provided rules of thumb for interpreting alpha values. They mentioned an alpha of .70 or higher as an appropriate range to measure the reliability. The test results for questions related are available in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N of Items</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha</th>
<th>KMO</th>
<th>Bartlett test</th>
<th>% from Total Variance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SAMAND</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sincerity</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.6447</td>
<td>.79526</td>
<td>0.891</td>
<td>.901</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>54.814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excitement</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.0598</td>
<td>.91212</td>
<td>0.927</td>
<td>.904</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>59.860</td>
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<tr>
<td>competence</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.7529</td>
<td>.90637</td>
<td>0.930</td>
<td>.903</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>61.135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sophistication</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.2976</td>
<td>.91780</td>
<td>0.885</td>
<td>.807</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>66.733</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruggedness</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.8809</td>
<td>.79463</td>
<td>0.680</td>
<td>.614</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>45.408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sincerity</td>
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<td>2.4481</td>
<td>.53246</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.814</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>58.77</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.53744</td>
<td>0.804</td>
<td>0.794</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>61.13</td>
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<tr>
<td>competence</td>
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<td>2.5129</td>
<td>.55443</td>
<td>0.802</td>
<td>0.823</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>51.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sophistication</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.4992</td>
<td>.59184</td>
<td>0.708</td>
<td>0.672</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>68.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruggedness</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.3081</td>
<td>.70470</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.686</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>59.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NIVEA</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sincerity</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.4481</td>
<td>.53246</td>
<td>0.744</td>
<td>0.814</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>58.77</td>
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<tr>
<td>Excitement</td>
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<td>.53744</td>
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<td>0.794</td>
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<td>51.8</td>
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<td>.59184</td>
<td>0.772</td>
<td>0.672</td>
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<td>68.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruggedness</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.3081</td>
<td>.70470</td>
<td>0.641</td>
<td>0.686</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>59.27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data Analysis**

To define the personality dimensions of chosen brands the T-test method was used to compare the means of each Brand personality attributes and evaluation of Iranian customers’ opinions. The results are available in the table 2.

The brand personality scale of Aaker (1997) was examined to see the adoptability of the model for three industries in Iran through Confirmatory Factor Analysis. For each of three brands, structural equation modeling, with the maximum likelihood method, was used (results are shown in the table 3). As recommended by Steenkamp and Baumgartner (2002) the goodness-of-fit index as well as adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI) was utilized and considered acceptable if above the recommended value of 0.90. Root mean square residual (RMSEA) is also suitable if the results are smaller than one. The most important index for evaluation of the fitness of the model is Chi-Square / DF (Patrick, 1997). Results clearly indicated that the model should be accepted but it needs some kinds of purification.
Table 2: T-Test Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>p-value</th>
<th>Mean difference</th>
<th>lower</th>
<th>Upper</th>
<th>Conclusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NIVEA</td>
<td>sincerity</td>
<td>-16.650</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-.55194</td>
<td>-.6172</td>
<td>-.4867</td>
<td>agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>excitement</td>
<td>-14.017</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-.46899</td>
<td>-.5349</td>
<td>-.4031</td>
<td>agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>competence</td>
<td>-14.111</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-.48708</td>
<td>-.5551</td>
<td>-.4191</td>
<td>agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sophistication</td>
<td>-13.591</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-.50078</td>
<td>-.5733</td>
<td>-.4282</td>
<td>agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ruggedness</td>
<td>7.023</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.30814</td>
<td>.2217</td>
<td>.3945</td>
<td>Not agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LG</td>
<td>sincerity</td>
<td>-16.650</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-.55194</td>
<td>-.6172</td>
<td>-.4867</td>
<td>agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>excitement</td>
<td>-14.017</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-.46899</td>
<td>-.5349</td>
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<td>-.4191</td>
<td>agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>257</td>
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<td>agree</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ruggedness</td>
<td>7.023</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.30814</td>
<td>.2217</td>
<td>.3945</td>
<td>Not agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAMAND</td>
<td>sincerity</td>
<td>-7.007</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-.35528</td>
<td>-.4552</td>
<td>-.2554</td>
<td>agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>excitement</td>
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<td>245</td>
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<td>.05976</td>
<td>-.0548</td>
<td>.1743</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>competence</td>
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<td>.000</td>
<td>-.24706</td>
<td>-.3609</td>
<td>-.1332</td>
<td>agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sophistication</td>
<td>5.085</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.29756</td>
<td>.1823</td>
<td>.4128</td>
<td>No agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ruggedness</td>
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<td>245</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-.31911</td>
<td>-.4189</td>
<td>-.2193</td>
<td>agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The final refined model for SAMAND personality dimensions (Figure 1) is a four-factor model without the ruggedness dimension, which concludes 24 attributes. The goodness of fit indices has been improved in the new model (table 3). The refined model for LG personality dimension is a five-factor model and although none of the main dimensions has been omitted, three attributes were deleted (Figure 3). Finally, for the last brand, the refined model (Figure 2) has totally 32 attributes which ruggedness as well as five other sub factors have been deleted.

**Conclusion and Suggestions**

The main purpose of this research is studying Aaker’s (1997) model to see the generalizability of the framework and its logical boundaries. Understanding of these logical limitations is important for future researches and the important role of brand personality in consumer behavior.

The results have provided better understanding of the application of this model in different industries in Iran. One of the interesting results from this research shows that all the five factors are clear for NIVEA and LG from customers view but for SAMAND, which is a new and Iranian brand the Excitement dimension, is not Crystal clear in the minds of consumers.

The answer to the first research question is that NIVEA and LG have four personality dimensions of Sincerity, Excitement, Sophistication, Competence and SAMAND has the three personality factors of Sincerity, Competence and Ruggedness. To answer the second research question, results of confirmatory factor analysis show that the Ruggedness dimension in all Brand’s Personality map has a poor fit and for two of them (SAMAND and NIVEA) has to be omitted to have a better measurement tool. Ruggedness dimension for SAMAND and NIVEA shows a kind of invalidity and has a poor relation with the main construct of brand personality.

And finally the refined models for all these three brands has been explained by different numbers of attribute in comparison with the original model and it shows the fact that the original model of BPS needs to be refined for different industries alone.
### Table 3: Goodness of Fitness Indices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteron</th>
<th>Indices</th>
<th>First model</th>
<th>Re- adjusted model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RMSEA</td>
<td>GFI</td>
<td>AGFI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;=1</td>
<td>&gt;.9</td>
<td>&gt;.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brands</td>
<td>SAMAND</td>
<td>.100</td>
<td>.967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LG</td>
<td>.066</td>
<td>.917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NIVEA</td>
<td>.097</td>
<td>.896</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Further Research**

For future research, using the scale in other product categories seems to be necessary and one of the subjects which have not been considered is the processes and antecedents of developing or changing a brand’s personality. The impact of brand personality on other performance measures needs to be studied and finally the ways of personality creation and its tools has not been studied a lot and needs to be considered.
Figure 1: CFA Model of SAMAND

Figure 2: CFA Model of NIVEA
References


Success Using A Structural Equation Modeling Approach", *Decision Sciences*, 28, 2