

The Analysis of Brand Personalities in Industrial Markets - an Exploratory Study

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Abstract

In order to remain distinct and to build up strong business relationships in an competitive environment, an increasing number of industrial marketers attempt to exploit the profiling potentials of branding. However, brand management in the industrial sector is still at its starting point. For this reason, the paper introduces the concept of brand personality to industrial markets. Hereby it reports on the development of the Industrial Brand Personality Scale. Potential dimensions and items are drawn from relevant literature and primary research. A number of research questions are empirically analyzed, which present both a framework for theoretical discussion and managerial implications.

Introduction

When we come across “Marlboro”, the image of a cowboy inevitably arises in our mind’s eye: adventurous, free, masculine, cool. The name of “Porsche” may well conjure up thoughts of an ambitious young man: sporty, attractive, high-income. But who do we see when we think of “SAP” or “General Electric”?

General Motors has an annual expenditure of 58 billion US dollars for industrial goods and services. That sum is equivalent to the gross national product of Portugal or Greece. Related to the corporation’s 1350 buyers, this equals a purchase volume of 31 million US dollars per buyer (Dwyer and Tanner, 2006). De Chernatony and McDonald (2003, 160) give an even pithier description: “(...) one can only refresh with Coca-Cola, but IBM computers can change people’s lives.”

These two examples give a first impression of the immense significance of the industrial goods sector. However, if we look at the interest in this sector’s communication and branding policy, we get a very different picture. Both practice and research have neglected the area of industrial marketing for decades. Both communication and branding policies have clearly been focused on consumer goods. Correspondingly, industrial brands still have markedly less clear profiles, as the example above show. It has only recently been recognized that the conditions on industrial markets call for a more intensive study of branding:

In that context it is observable that the constant assimilation of quality and service levels leads to problems in differentiating even technically sophisticated goods. Increasing price pressure prompted by continuing globalization heightens the risk of price battles. These in turn manifest themselves in standardization tendencies. As a consequence, more and more industrial companies are recognizing the value of branding, in order to distinguish themselves from the competition in today’s intransparent markets. However, building up and maintaining a strong brand is a difficult task. In this context, both research and practice have found the use of the “brand as person” metaphor to be an accepted device for building up successful brands in the consumer sector (Davis and Chun 2003). In the industrial sector in particular, this concept seems to be of high relevance, as a unique brand personality encourages the target group to perceive the brand as an active, contributing partner and thus serves as a platform for building long-term and close relationships between the companies of a value chain. So more astonishing does it seem that— although business literature now does include research conducted on branding in general – the concept of brand personality has not been examined in an industrial context so far.

Given the above illustrations, the objectives of our paper are twofold:

(a) We aim to examine brand personalities in the industrial sector, in order to extend prior research on this prominent concept. Of key interest to our analysis here is what kind of brand personalities industrial companies possess and how these can be measured. The purpose of this research is to present a brand personality scale that is directed towards the distinct characteristics of the industrial sector.

(b) We intend to provide a foundation for a more systematic use of branding strategies in the industrial sector. To do so, we will analyze different industrial brand personalities. In order to better understand the decision processes of buying centres, we will further examine to what extent staff from various areas assess brand personalities differently.

To achieve these goals, our paper is organized as follows:

Section 2 defines the importance of industrial branding as well as functions of brand management in the industrial sector. Section 3 then relates the existing research in the field of brand personality, in order to provide a comprehensive basis for its application to the brand policies of industrial companies. In this connection, it becomes evident that concepts developed for the consumer market can be applied to the industrial sector in general, but need further adaptations and extensions. Subsequently, the development of our extended brand personality scale for the industrial sector is described and empirically tested for an exclusive set of industrial companies (section 4). We discuss the implications of our findings for both theory and industrial marketers in section 5.

Importance and Peculiarities of Industrial Branding

As described above, industrial companies are increasingly facing tougher competition and a continuous assimilation of quality and service levels. In intensively competitive markets with increasing homogenization of services and fast-moving technologies, sellers are becoming ever more interchangeable from a buyer’s point of view. However, once quality has become a hygiene factor and industrial sellers’ performance is no longer viewed as a relevant factor for purchase decisions,

branding becomes the last remaining opportunity to stand out from the competition. Although both research and practice have already begun to recognize the importance of branding in industrial markets some years ago, there are still far fewer concepts for steering industrial brands than in the consumer sector. In order to further develop this area of research we will first take a closer look at the characteristics of industrial brands and compare them with different brand types of consumer goods. From the comparative analysis we hope to derive possible starting points for an advanced brand management in the industrial sector.

Branding in general is regarded as an important element of marketing strategy. In this context a brand is defined as an associated perception, which is rooted in the psyche of the target group and retrieved through the display of symbols that represent the organization (Kapferer, 2001). A strong brand shifts the competitive framework in the firm's favour, giving it intangible values which are difficult to replicate. It may thus serve both as a means of identification and differentiation. It creates ongoing value for firms even in highly competitive and commoditized markets (Schultz and Schultz, 2000). Whereas this definition holds true both for consumer and industrial brands, there are key differentiating factors in the manner in which both sectors built and maintain their brands. In more concrete terms, industrial brands are based on different value associations than consumer brands. This is due to the different facets of industrial market transactions:

In this context it should firstly be noted that in industrial markets we are dealing not with an original demand but rather with a derivative one. This results from the demand for goods and services, which are to be provided with the help of other industrial goods. Consequently, both supply and demand in industrial markets are represented by organizations. These both characteristics lead to further peculiarities of industrial transaction processes: multipersonal decision making bodies (buying centres) make purchasing decisions, usually within a framework of formalized, protracted procurement processes. The members of these buying centres are normally highly qualified professionals and tend to make decisions supported by logical reasoning and thus with less tendency to impulse buying (Gilliland and Johnston, 1997).

Regarding the discussed characteristics, it becomes evident that goods and services in the industrial sector represent solutions to problems. They are intended to fulfill a concrete need. For this reason they are often developed in co-operation between sellers and buyers and are highly customized. This fact however indicates the necessity for long-term, trustful partnerships. In view of the growing dominance of technology sellers should thereby communicate the qualities of compatibility and integration inherent in their goods and services in order to minimize perceived risks on the part of their business partners (Schmitz, 1995).

The above illustrations indicate that industrial brands first of all are defined in terms of functional brand values such as product features and performance. Moreover, they take on a guarantee and trust function. In this sense sellers of branded goods guarantee with their reputation the individually agreed quality and hence also the success of the business relationship. Besides their functional benefits, industrial brands also serve a sourcing function. Because of the specific nature of industrial goods and services as well as the risks posed by the lack of comparability, sellers must be contactable in order to dispel quality doubts. Here the brand operates to a certain extent as the visiting card of the company.

Consequently the self-expressive benefits of a brand play a much smaller role in industrial markets than in consumer goods markets. Here, branded services and goods – as a result of individual, original buying decisions – are often purchased for reasons of prestige. Customers try for example to demonstrate their membership of a particular social group or want to express a certain lifestyle. Objective product information accompanied by rational decision making is thus far less important. (Kotler and Andreasen, 2003).

In summary, it can be seen that purchasing decision processes in industrial markets are very complex, require high investments and are normally effected multipersonally. Purchasing risks and requirements for information are consequently significantly higher than in consumer markets. Industrial brands therefore must communicate competence and trust more intensively in order to reduce perceived uncertainties and to enter into a long-term relationship with their customers.

However, besides the differences described between industrial and consumer brands, the two sectors also dispose of similarities concerning their brand management: For although the combination of buying centre principle, derivative instead of original demand and the service complexity described, demands an objective decision making approach, it has become noticeable in recent years that industrial marketers too begin to seek differentiation in emotional brand values. A reason for this lies in the fact that adopting emotional values to the definition and communication of a brand can be an important means of differentiation in markets dominated by pure functionality. Moreover emotions facilitate the interaction with the business partners, which in turn promotes an entry into long-term,

strategic business relationships (Lynch and Chernatony, 2004). Whereas emotional brand augmentation has been an accepted device for consumer goods for many years, there is finally evidence also from industrial markets that companies recognize that “the best brands appeal both to heart and head” (Price, 2005).

Whereas the aforementioned comparison was mainly directed towards the differences of product consumer brands and industrial brands, we will now include corporate brands into our analysis. A reason for this lies in the fact that - in contrary to consumer markets - corporate brands and not product brands are dominant in the industrial goods area. It could thus be assumed, that concepts developed for corporate brands would be particularly suited to accommodate the specialized requirements of industrial brands. This assumption can be easily substantiated by the peculiarities of the industrial market: it is more difficult to create a product brand for highly customized products because the comparability and therefore consistency evident in brands is not given. Because of the speed of technological change, there is also not sufficient time to amortize the costs for the creation of independent product brands (Stern, 2000). Additionally, the dominance of corporate brands in the industrial area can be easily understood in terms of content: in times of ever shortening product cycles corporate brands guarantee dependability and continuity. This form of stable and constant branding policy serves in its turn as a risk reducing function. Trust and a willingness to enter into long-term relationship grow from it (Ind, 1997; Palazzo, 2003). A corporate brand must however satisfy not only the customers but also many other demanding stakeholders such as investors and employees. This holds the danger of diluting the brand message in favor of general applicability. It may thus lead to an associated loss of identity (Hatch and Schultz, 2003).

In summary, it can be acknowledged that industrial brands in their function resemble corporate brands rather more closely than product brands. However, in their specific target group orientation they must be more closely oriented towards the customer. They should not try to be all things to all target groups. The difficulty therefore lies in the fact that industrial brands must convey just as great a measure of trust and respectability as corporate brands, yet cannot be allowed their vagueness and universal applicability. Otherwise the fulfillment of its identifying and differentiating function is endangered at the product level.

Overall, our comparative analysis shows that brands “serve precisely the same role” (Murphy, 1998, p. 60) either in different markets (consumer versus industrial) or on different strategy levels (corporate versus product brand). It is therefore rather the extent of the functions fulfilled and the relative value emphasis which differentiates between them: for example, the self-expressive benefit of a brand has a different relevance. In this context the meaning of social factors such as image, prestige and emotive bonding takes on a greater role in the consumer area. Industrial brands on the other hand must emphasize more strongly their problem solving competence and trustworthiness. Yet corporate brands which can communicate the necessary level of competence and stability lack the clear customer orientation.

This result shows clearly that existing marketing concepts can be applied to the industrial sector in general, though they do require specific adaptations. We suppose that this fact in particular is a reason for the paucity of research as well as of practitioners’ activities in industrial branding. In order to further advance understanding of the way in which industrial brands are built up and maintained, we will now introduce the concept of brand personalities to industrial markets.

The Concept of Brand Personality as a Device for an Advanced Brand Policy in the Industrial Sector

Advantages of the Concept of Brand Personality for Industrial Branding

The concept of brand personality is based on the assumption that people tend to personify objects surrounding them. By describing brands in terms of human characteristics it serves as a major device in generating brand attachment and brand awareness in much the same way as people bond themselves together (Plummer, 1984). As already mentioned in section 2, today brands must essentially meet two challenges: emotionalization and differentiation. The traditional characteristic and effect oriented approaches to brand management can no longer meet these challenges (Gobé, 2001). Here, identity oriented brand management, as demonstrated by the concept of brand personality, can help in steering brands by the use of their unique personality (Tan Tsu Wee, 2003):

In this context the first essential advantage of a brand personality lies in its uniqueness. Just as every human personality is unique, so also does every brand personality exist only once. Associations with brand personalities therefore, allow to place brands that are clearly distinguishable from competitors' brands on the market (Aaker and Fournier, 1995).

Besides being able to differentiate between brands, the personality factor might also reflect the emotions or feelings of the brand. An emphasis on emotive brand values however, encourages the target group to perceive the brand as an active, contributing friend and to enter into a long-term relationship with the brand (Aaker and Fournier, 1995). Thus the concept of brand personality also offers valuable assistance with respect to relationship aspects. This is all the more true because a constant brand personality at the same time generates trust on the part of the customer: He relies on the values communicated by the brand that enable a unique promise about an experience to be made (Ward and Light and Goldstine, 1999).

In the last, the concept of brand personality is also relevant from a practical point of view: because of the ease with which brand personalities can be intuitively grasped, respondents have hardly any difficulties in relating specific personality attributes to brands (Larson, 2002). In summary therefore it can be said that brand personalities are able to combine functional and emotional brand values, to communicate trust and in this way to bind customers in the long term. The concept therefore also seems to provide a reasonable answer to the branding peculiarities of industrial markets. In order to arrive at conclusions regarding an industrial brand personality concept we have however to consider the origin and the limitations of this concept in greater detail.

History and Concept of Brand Personality

The device of equating a brand with a person is not new: The realisation that people grant lifeless objects human qualities, even give them a soul, was already discussed in Gilmore's "Theory of Animism" at the beginning of the last century (Azoulay and Kapferer, 2003). Since then, the idea of brands having a personality just as human beings do has been further developed. It was in practice that the term "brand personality" was first coined: As early as 1958, Martineau applied the expression to the characteristic dimensions of a retail store (Martineau, 1958). Further studies followed, aiming to identify the personality factors that could contribute to a positive, strong brand image (cf. Lindquist, 1974; Berry, 1969).

Researching the concept of brand personality was initially seen as feasible only through qualitative rather than through quantitative data (Hanby, 1999; Durgee, 1988). The respondent is typically asked to imagine the brand as a person and is questioned to suggest what type of car this person would drive or in what kind of house he would live, until a comprehensible association is formed with the product or organization (Davis and Chun, 2004; King, 1973).

As most of this work, however, was context-specific without providing any generic measurement approach for comparing the consumer's perception of any company with that of its competitors (Markham, 1972), the quantitative measurement of brand personality was pursued from the beginning of the 1970s (Hieronimus, 2003). In this endeavour, researchers attempted to find human characteristics that completely describe a brand's personality. Much of this work was based on translated theories of human personality (for details see Azouley and Kapferer, 2003). Batra et al. (1993) for example used Anderson's (1968) human personality traits in order to measure the image of retail brands. As a result, seven factors comprising 35 items were defined. In comparison, Biel (1993) used 28 human descriptors to analyse brand image. In 1997, Aaker (1997) developed a measurement scale called the "Brand Personality Scale" (BPS). In the development of her conceptual framework, she largely followed the steps of the US psychologists Costa and McCrae, who examined the famous "Big Five" or five-factor model (McCrae and Costa, 1989). In her work, she drew her scale from a much larger list of possible items (114) than previous studies on brand management. To guarantee a universal solution, she explored 37 brands covering various industries. 631 interviewees were each asked to rate 10 brand stimuli based on the 114 items with the aid of a 5-point-rating-scale. Because of the broadness of the factors and in order to facilitate factor interpretation, Aaker conducted additional factor analyses for the item list of each of the five factors. Using this, she generated 15 so-called "facets". According to Aaker, these facets are representative enough for the dimension they load on, in other words they allow a more parsimonious description of brand personalities (Aaker, 1997). The end result of her study was a brand personality scale that consisted of 42 traits, 15 facets and 5 dimensions (see table 1).

TABLE 1: THE BRAND PERSONALITY SCALE

Sincerity	Excitement	Competence	Sophistication	Ruggedness
down-to-earth family-oriented small-town	daring trendy exciting	reliable hard working secure	upper class glamorous good looking	outdoorsy masculine Western
honest sincere real	spirited cool young	intelligent technical corporate	charming feminine smooth	tough rugged
cheerful sentimental friendly	up-to-date independent contemporary	successful leader confident		
wholesome original	imaginative unique			

Source: Own illustration of the scale according to Aaker, J. (1997)

The final scale was tested and re-tested on large samples of American respondents. This follow-up research proved that Aaker's solution can be seen as a reliable and valid construction that analyses the perceived human characteristics of brands and measures the validity of these traits among subjects (Venable et al. 2005; Davies and Chun, 2003). Besides the methodical precision and representative nature of the study, the essential advantage of the scale is that, using a single instrument, brands from the most diverse product categories can be measured and systematically compared, which in turn offers other possibilities, e.g. benchmarking of brand personalities. Additionally, using the brand personality construction, brands can not only be measured but also steered in practice by systematically manipulating individual items within the dimensions. Since most of the recent work in examining brand personalities is thus based on the BPS, this measure can be seen as a milestone in the investigation of brand personality.

Further developments of the Brand Personality Scale

The advantages already discussed as well as the postulated general applicability of the BPS made Aaker's work of interest for a variety products, countries and sectors so that there is already a correspondingly large number of further development projects. Hereby especially the following research questions regarding the validity of the scale were pursued:

1. Is the BPS also able to reflect differences in brand personalities within a limited product market?
2. Can the BPS also be applied in an intercultural context?
3. Is the BPS also a valid measurement instrument outwith the consumer sector?

In view of the practical implications which can be derived from the Brand Personality Scale, a large number of studies exist which deal with the effects of the brand personality in diverse product markets. Although the majority of these studies pointed out the positive effects of the brand personality as regards brand preference (Wysong (2000), Kim (2000)), willingness to recommend (Hayes (1999), Kim and Han and Park (2000)) and willingness to pay (Hayes (1999), Villegas and Earnhart and Burns (2000)), the structure of the BPS could only be confirmed in each case after amendments in the form of item reductions. An exact replication of the five-factor structure with all 42 items does not exist for any product market so that a general applicability to specific product categories must be seriously doubted (Austin et al., 2003).

In the area of the international applicability of the Aaker scale, studies conducted in the French market (Ferrandi et al., 2000), in the Japanese and Spanish markets (Aaker et al., 2001) and in the German market (Hieronimus, 2003) deserve mention. In all studies however, it must be pointed out that the scale also varies according to the intercultural context. Significant cultural differences are evident both in the number and interpretation of factors. While Hieronimus generates a 2-factor solution e.g. for Germany, six factors result for both France and the Netherlands. Where the factor "robustness" plays an important role in the USA it is replaced in Spain and Japan by the characteristic "peacefulness". These differences show that the brand personality scale must be adapted to different culture regions.

At last the general applicability of the Aaker Scale to different sectors was doubted in some studies. In this sense Voeth and Herbst (2007) examined the applicability of the Aaker Scale to non-profit brands and also produced a negative result. A similar result was obtained by Davies et al. (2004) in the course of a study of corporate brands. The research group therefore developed a new measurement scale, the Corporate Character Scale (CCS), which offers valuable implications for the management of corporate brands. Because of the dominance of corporate brands in industrial markets, we will take a closer look on the CCS:

After applying Aaker's BPS to three corporate brands including one from the industrial sector in which both employees as well as customers of the companies were interviewed, the relatively poor reliability of the solution led to the necessity to adjust the scale (Davies et al., 2001). The CCS was generated after a renewed selection of items based on already existing literature and the results of qualitative studies. In the main study 13 companies were to be evaluated according to the 93 items. The results of an exploratory factor analysis resulted in a 7-factor solution with a declared total variance of 72%. Two of the seven factors resulted in a Cronbach's Alpha of significantly less than 0.7 (machismo, informality), but were retained because of their potential relevance. The remaining five factors were divided into facets. This resulted in the following scale with seven factors, 49 items and 16 facets (cp. fig. 2).

The final scale was tested and re-tested on large samples of both employees and clients. This follow-up research proved that the CCS can be seen as a reliable and valid tool for measuring corporate reputation. The authors see the value of their results above all in simultaneously taking into account customer and employee perception (Davis et al., 2004).

TABLE 2: THE CORPORATE CHARACTER SCALE

Agreeableness	Enterprise	Competence	Chick	Ruthlessness	Informality	Machismo
warmth friendly pleasant open straightforward	modernity cool Trendy Young	conscientiousness reliable secure Hardworking	elegance charming stylish Elegant	egotism arrogant aggressive Selfish	none casual simple easy- going	none masculine tough Rugged
empathy concerned reassuring supportive agreeable	adventure imaginative Up- to- date exciting innovative	drive ambitious achievement oriented leading	prestige prestigious exclusive Refined	dominance inward- looking authoritarian controlling		
integrity honest sincere trustworthy socially responsible	boldness extrovert daring	technocracy technical corporate	snobbery snobby elitist			

Source: Own illustration of the scale according to Davies et al. (2004).

Transferability of the Concept of Brand Personality to the Industrial Markets

Although Aaker's study constitutes an important milestone in the research of brand personalities, it is subject to certain limitations. In this sense the above illustrations show that various studies cast doubt on the suitability of the scale within a product market. Additionally, the problems of intercultural applicability were discussed. For the purpose of our research, the most obvious limitation is also the most important one: Aaker only analyzed consumer brands and neglected the evaluation of non-profit and industrial brands. In view of the differences to consumer brands described in section 2 its applicability to industrial brands must therefore be doubted, too.

The CCS for its part has made considerable progress in the study of corporate brands. However its limitations for the purpose of our research also result from the differences section 2: corporate brands must demonstrate a more ambivalent character than industrial brands. This is also reflected in the generation of the CCS. Customer perception and employee evaluation were taken into account equally. Davies et al. (2004) themselves point out that in focussing on only one demand group it is possible that other attributes become more important. It can for example be surmised that in customer interviews alone, the "dominance" facet with items such as "authoritarian" or "controlling" has less emphasis. Additionally, consumer brands again dominate in the selection of stimuli.

In conclusion one can say that the implementation of brand personalities makes sense particularly in the industrial sector. However existing concepts should not be applied without adjustments to industrial companies – as has been demonstrated by the presentation of the BPS, the further development of the CCS and limitations of both concepts. Other value emphases in different brand types also mean differences in dimensions and facets of the relevant brand personality scales. Thus the necessity for an independent scale for industrial companies is proven. The next section is dedicated to providing a starting point for industrial brand-building with the personality concept. As in the major part of the preceding research work, we too will rely exclusively on the research of Aaker (1997) in order avoid potential errors which may have resulted from the adaptation of the BPS to other research areas.

Conception of a Brand Personality Scale for the Industrial Sector

Method and Objectives of this Research

Because prior research has not examined brand personality in the industrial sector, we chose to use a multi-method explorative design. Firstly, we applied a discovery approach that consisted of two qualitative methods: in-depth interviews of current industrial executives and content analysis of the mission statements of industrial companies. After summarizing the results of these studies, we conducted a third and a fourth study, in order to quantitatively investigate brand personalities in the industrial sector. Based on our aforementioned conclusions in section 2 and 3, our methodology was designed to address the following research questions:

Q1: Is Aaker's BPS able to describe brand personalities from the industrial sector?

Q2: If not, what are the characteristic dimensions of industrial brand personalities and how can they be measured?

Q3: Do industrial brand personalities consist of more dimensions than the BPS because of the multipersonal buying centre decisions?

Besides the analysis of the specific characteristics of industrial brand personalities we furthermore were interested in how far implications of the concept could be derived for industrial marketers. We therefore included the following questions in our study:

Q4: Do different industrial brand personalities exist?

Q5: Do staff from various areas assess brand personalities differently?

Qualitative Studies

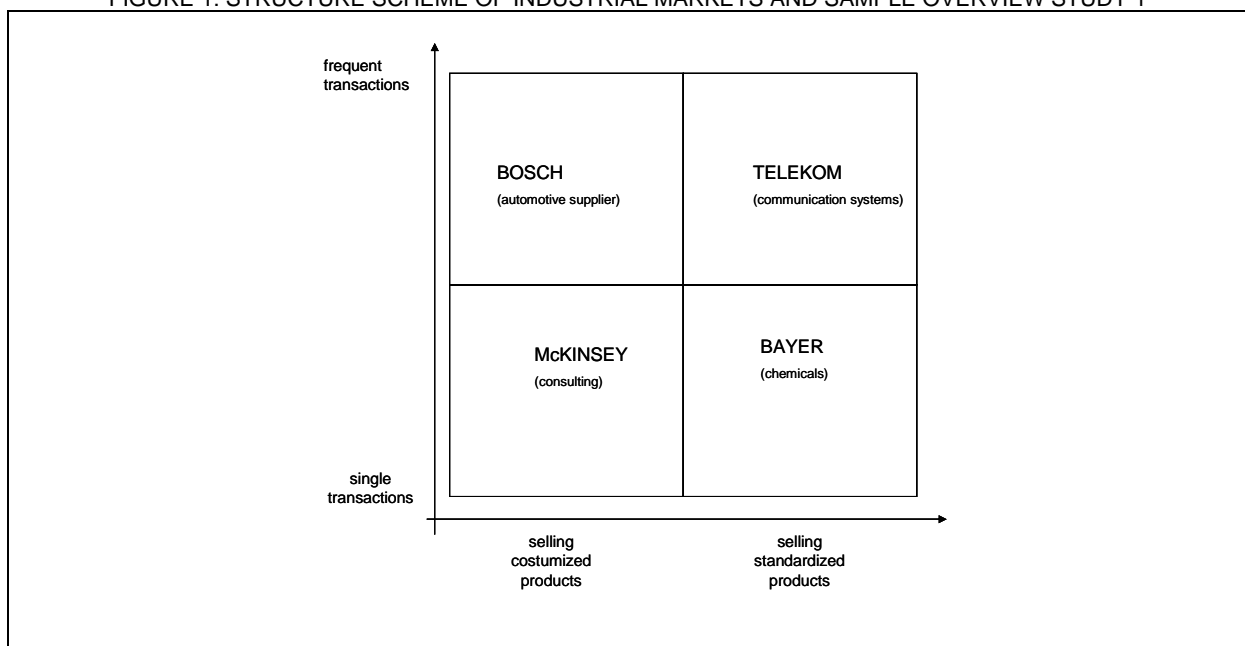
As we were able to assume, on the basis of the previous theoretical considerations, that neither the items of the BPS are sufficient for describing brand personalities in the industrial sector satisfactorily nor that there is any other suitable further development of that scale for the purpose of our study, we conducted preliminary studies for item selection among industrial practitioners (study 1). Moreover, mission statements of industrial companies were analyzed (study 2).

Study 1. In the first qualitative study, we conducted in-depth interviews with 28 marketing experts from four different, well-known industrial companies (cp fig. 1). In order to assure an adequate sample selection for the purpose of our study, we analyzed the structure of industrial markets in more detail. In doing so, we discovered that two dimensions seem to be suitable for structuring the heterogeneous character of industrial market transactions: As illustrated in figure 2, our first dimension focused on companies that were either involved in single or multiple transactions with the same customer. On the other hand we compared the degree of product standardization (companies selling commodities vs companies producing highly standardized). Following these considerations we chose to conduct expert interviews in 4 companies, each covering one section. In this sense we selected the companies Bosch, Bayer, T-Systems and McKinsey. For the purpose of drawing generally valid conclusions, T-Systems as an industrial service company was also deliberately chosen. An overview of our sample is depicted in figure 1.

All in-depth interviews were conducted face-to-face and structured by guidelines containing the following questions: Firstly, the interviewees were asked to indicate the importance and functions of brands in industrial markets. We then asked the experts what characteristics they regarded as most important in business partners. Finally we let the experts describe both their own company as well as two of the three other companies considered. Here, we instructed the interviewees to list for each company at least three adjectives that describe this company "as if had come to life as a person".

Study 2. In addition to the in-depth interviews, images and "mission statements" of the biggest German industrial companies listed in the DAX (18 in total), were analyzed by means of content analysis, in order to derive additional items for the questionnaire. This procedure seems to be particularly appropriate, as mission statements contain the inherent values and norms of an organization by displaying the company's goals and behavioral maxims. This time again, we chose companies covering all four sections in order to guarantee the comprehensiveness of our qualitative research. Interestingly, almost all items were mentioned several times so that hardly any unique mission statements exist. "Innovative" for example appears in combination with "integrational" and "international" in five of the 18 models examined. This emphasizes the danger of dilution and interchangeability of industrial brands, which we have already mentioned.

FIGURE 1: STRUCTURE SCHEME OF INDUSTRIAL MARKETS AND SAMPLE OVERVIEW STUDY 1



Results. Overall in our qualitative work we were able to extract 82 items found suitable to describe the brand personalities of industrial companies. However, some of these terms were found to be similar to those used by the Aaker scale or were synonyms or antonyms of established characteristics. We therefore reduced the collection by 10 items. Consequently, we arrived at 72 new descriptive items during our qualitative phase (cp. also table 3).

Quantitative Studies

We conducted the research in the quantitative phase in a two-step process: Firstly, we conducted a pilot study among business professionals in order to reduce our qualitatively generated item pool to really relevant items (study 3). Then, during the main survey (study 4), we examined our proposed research questions by means of exploratory factor analysis. We chose this method, as factor analysis is the most commonly used analytical technique for data reduction and refining constructs. It aims to represent the item data in as few dimensions as possible while identifying factors that are meaningful.

Study 3. To finally reduce the item pool to relevant items, 92 practitioners from a variety of industrial companies were asked personally via telephone to evaluate our chosen four industrial brands each according to the remaining 72 items. The average age of the participants was 38.7 years. 68% of the participants were male. In order to identify those items, which were considered as appropriate to define an industrial brand personality, the mean value of all evaluations of each item was calculated, and a cut-off was used at "4=applies somewhat". As a result, 31 items were rated as relevant and included in the main survey. These new descriptors as well as the excluded items are depicted in table 3. Looking at the relevant items more in detail it becomes obvious that nine of these items were already listed in the CCS. These items are open, achievement oriented, innovative, straightforward, elitist, refined, exclusive, arrogant and trustworthy. In this result we see a firmer confirmation of our aforementioned assumption that corporate and industrial brands share some similarities but that both brand types can neither be equally measured nor managed.

Study 4. The brand selection of the main study followed the previously conducted pilot studies, in order to increase the reliability of our results. In order to be able to obtain a large number of cases in a short time, we chose to use an online questionnaire to which replies were invited per email. The addressees for the email invitation were composed of graduates from two German universities because here the proportion of company employees in relevant positions could be expected to be high. A total of 1113 people could be contacted in this way. During a period of three weeks, we received 138 usable replies to the online questionnaire. The average age of the participants was 32.2 years, with a span ranging from 22 to 63 years. With a percentage of 67.6, male participants were overrepresented.

TABLE 3: CALCULATION OF ITEM RELEVANCE

Relevant Items	mean-scores	Excluded Items	mean-scores
international	5,10	energetic	3,93
well- known	4,97	service-oriented	3,93
professional	4,90	consistent	3,92
experienced	4,88	interested	3,92
trustworthy	4,84	elaborate	3,92
elitist	4,80	traditional	3,91
competent	4,78	complicated	3,91
serious	4,65	communicative	3,90
scientific	4,63	expensive	3,90
inventive	4,58	accurate	3,90
arrogant	4,57	agile	3,78
exclusive	4,54	flexible	3,75
refined	4,42	bureaucratic	3,68
rational	4,35	anxious	3,63
duteous	4,33	down- to- earth	3,48
thinking	4,30	binding	3,45
problem-oriented	4,28	aloof	3,43
analytical	4,28	takes over work	3,40
decent	4,20	helpful	3,40
proper	4,20	famous	3,33
solid	4,20	friendly	3,30
careful	4,18	delightful	3,18
innovative	4,10	human	3,18
conservative	4,05	tries to fulfill everyones desire	3,13
omnipresent	4,03	full	3,10
reliable	4,03	reserved	3,10
constant	4,03	chick	3,08
straightforward	4,02	inactive	3,03
innovative	4,02	sparing	2,95
achievement oriented	4,02	superficial	2,95
open	4,02	inaccessibly	2,93
		crusted	2,88
		noble	2,85
		to create own problems	2,83
		trendy	2,80
		balanced	2,80
		hesitant	2,78
		modest	2,70
		smooth	2,60
		invisible	2,33
		half- parted	1,83

The questionnaire was structured in three sections. At the beginning of the online questionnaire we placed two qualifying questions. The first was to ensure that the respondents knew the industrial brands they had to evaluate. The other was to ascertain whether the respondents had already been involved in business transactions with one of the four brands. In the next section of the survey, the respondents were asked to evaluate each one (in order to reduce respondent fatigue) of the given brands based on 73 items. These items were the 42 items from the Aaker scale and the additional 31 items found to be relevant during the preliminary study. The evaluation of characteristics was again conducted with the aid of a six-point rating scale. In this, the sequence of items was reversed in order to reduce fluctuations in response behaviour caused by respondent fatigue. The selection of brands

was made using an algorithm which ensured the even distribution of the evaluations. Moreover we deliberately excluded an intermediate response in order to avoid hidden “protest” or “don’t know” answers. Finally, questions were also asked concerning demographic factors and professional activity.

The quality of our chosen stimuli brands is proven by the wide recognition of the brands as well as the large number of business contacts to the brands contained in the questionnaire (cp table 4).

TABLE 4: RECOGNITION OF STIMULI BRANDS

	Bosch	Bayer	McKinsey	T- Systems
brand recognition	100 %	99 %	97 %	91 %
business contact	42 %	12 %	38 %	53 %

Additionally, almost all relevant functions respectively roles of possible buying centres are included in the sample (cp table 5). Thus the characteristic described in section 2, that industrial purchasing is a multipersonal and multifunctional decision process is also taken into account in our empirical data.

TABLE 5: SAMPLE STRUCTURE ACCORDING TO FUNCTION AND EXPERTISE

department	answers	
	absolute	relative
Marketing	20	14,5 %
Controlling	18	13,0 %
Distribution	18	13,0 %
Purchase	15	10,9 %
Accounting	14	10,1 %
Management	13	9,4 %
Logistic	7	5,1 %
Research/ Development	6	4,3 %
Human Resources	5	3,6 %
Other*	49	35,5 %
Number of repondents	138	100 %
Answers abs./rel. per respondent**	165	1,2

Research Findings

In order to answer our first research question Q1, an exploratory factor analysis on the basis of the *original 42 items* of the Aaker scale was conducted to examine the extent to which our empirical data corresponded with the five-factor solution of the Aaker scale. The database consisted of *all* item evaluations for the *four industrial brands*. According to the Kaiser criterion a first analysis resulted in a nine-factor solution. They could explain 67.3% of the total variance. However, by analyzing the result more in detail, we stated that only four of the factors provided at least two item loadings of 0.5 or above and nine items would have to be excluded as they showed to high cross-loadings. Moreover the resulting four-factor solution could be confirmed based on a scree-plot. Factor 1 hereby contained 7 items of the original item “Excitement” and four other items of the factor “Sophistication”. The second factor combined seven items of the factor “Sincerity” and three items of the factor “Competence”. The remaining items were equally distributed on factor 3 and 4 without being interpretable. These findings confirm that the Aaker scale is insufficient to describe brand personalities in the industrial sector.

For the development of an extended scale for the industrial sector (cf. research question Q2), we conducted a further explorative factor analysis, this time including *all 73 items* of the questionnaire. In this analysis we extracted a three-factor solution. In order to receive a stable factor structure, we applied, additionally to the scree plot criterion, the demand that each factor should provide at least four item loadings of 0.55 or above. As it is a well-known fact that factor loadings vary by number of extracted factors, we also extracted, besides the three-factor solution, a four-factor and a five-factor solution. However, the aforementioned additional demand could not be accomplished. Both solutions revealed dimensions that provided maximal one item loading above 0.5. These factors are thus hardly interpretable. Consequently, we extracted the three-factor solution as final result.

Because in this solution, too some items did not provide unambiguous loadings, we had to reduce the original item list to 39 items. Both items from the Aaker scale as well items from our newly generated item pool had to be excluded. The criteria for the item reduction were:

- Factor loading of at least 0.55 on one factor
- Cross-loading not higher than 0.4 on the other factors
- No loadings on more than one factor (for this demand, the difference between the highest loading of an item and the closest lower loading > 0.25)

The thus generated three-factor solution could explain 56.35 % of the total variance, which we can consider as satisfactory. An overview of the variances explained by each factor is illustrated in table 6.

In analogy to Aaker's methods, the factors were subdivided into facets to allow for better interpretation. For this purpose the relevant items were subjected to a further factor analysis with Varimax-Rotation without predefinition of factor values. Applying the Kaiser criterion, three of these facets were obtained for the first factor and two for the second. The seven items of the third factor were combined into one facet. Aaker names these facets according to the item with the highest relative loading while Davies. et al use names in the CCS which are as descriptive as possible. In this present case a combination of these alternatives was used: if the item with the highest loading described the remaining items as completely as possible, then this was used as the facet name. Where this was not the case, a new item was chosen which defines the facet in total as closely as possible in the interests of clearer understanding (in our case this was in the case of the definition of factor 3).

TABLE 6: EXPLAINED VARIANCES BY FACTORS

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Aggregate
explained proportion of total dispersion	28,68%	16,87%	10,80%	56,35%

The first of the three generated factors consists of 19 items. It encompasses mainly items of the new item collection and entails only two items of the Aaker scale (hard working, intelligent). It especially emphasizes the rational, efficiency-oriented part of the brand personality, which was said to be of high relevance for industrial companies. We will therefore call this factor "Performance". The second factor only contains items of the original BPS. As already mentioned, emotional brand augmentation is increasingly important, albeit in an organisational setting. Organisational decision making may take place in a rather rational context, but industrial purchasing is nevertheless an amalgam of individual decisions influenced by both functional and emotional factors. As this second factor is very similar (only smaller) to Aaker's factor "Excitement", we will call it "Sensation". Also the third factor only encompasses items of the BPS. This time again characteristics are combined which were judged as especially important for industrial companies: Items such as sincerity, honesty a.s.o. all have a positive impact on the building of trust in business relationships. They are able to minimize risks perceived by the customers, as these feel conscious about the sellers' behaviours and efforts. Accordingly the interpretation of "Authenticity" seems to well describe factor 3.

The three factors constitute a very good interpretation of the factor structures, providing unambiguous and high loadings. We found out that all three of the symbolic personality dimensions demonstrate high reliability. In this sense, alpha coefficients of the three factors were 0.948 for "Performance", 0.904 for "Sensation" and 0.880 for "Authenticity". The adjusted item-to-total correlation provided a mean level of 0.66 and lies between 0.51 and 0.83. We therefore assume a high level of internal reliability for the factors.

Following Aaker's method, the stability of the solution was tested by means of partial sampling. Subject to the three-factor solution, the 39 items were applied to four sub-samples of the total sample. Firstly, an ageing split at 30 years produced a "younger" (n=62, average age of 26.73) and an "older" partial sample (n=76, average age of 36.75). The factor structure could be replicated almost identically in both samples. Both the items as well as their factor loadings were equivalent to the original matrix. In addition, two further groups were formed by the division into "male" (n=106) and "female" (n=32). In both partial samples the 3-factor structure could be replicated again. Although the stability of our solution was thus tested only by exploratory means, the exact replicability of the three factors in every sample survey substantiates our assumption of a stable solution. As our newly generated scale is based on the Aaker scale we will call it the "Industrial Brand Personality Scale" (IBPS). It is depicted in table 7.

Our three-factor solution deduced however leads to a negative response to our research question Q3. This posed the question whether a scale for the measurement of industrial brand personalities contains more characteristics than the end customer oriented BPS. The reason for asking the question was the heterogeneous roles and functions in buying centres, which must cater for brand personality.

An understanding of the motives of buying center members (Lancaster and Jobber, 1994) however makes clear that although the individuals are involved in differing specialist fields and have differing ranges of experience, the individual decision risk taken by each member is nevertheless based upon the same information symmetries and uncertainties. The demands of external stakeholders really are motivated by differing ambitions and business objectives as the multidimensional nature of the CCS has shown. Of course a customer will make different demands on a company from those of an employee but the essential expectations of a purchaser as a rule will not differ significantly from those of a production manager. In this sense it is assumed that one is more interested in price and the other in technical details but that both are looking for a confidence building substitute which will minimize their perceived personal decision risk. This substitute must be provided by the brand personality of an industrial company and this is defined not by the number but rather by the content of the dimensions.

TABLE 7: THE INDUSTRIAL BRAND PERSONALITY SCALE

“Performance”	“Sensation”	“Authenticity”
performance-oriented	exciting	sincere
professional	young	genuine
analytical	glamorous	friendly
hard working	cool	indigenous
intelligent	trendy	honest
pro-active	daring	originally
educated	good-looking	family-oriented
	adventurous	
	visionary	
qualified	charming	
straight	cheerful	
careful	feminine	
experienced	tempered	
rational		
problem-oriented		
dutous		
leading		
innovative		
international		
scientific		
inventive		

Since the IBPS provides a brand personality scale for industrial companies whose internal reliability and stability has been confirmed, we can go on to analyze research questions Q4 and Q5 in order to examine the perception of industrial brand in more detail and to derive some managerial implications. In the operationalization of research question Q4 we refrained from an evaluation according to all four sections of our stimuli selection because the companies are possibly too polarized and therefore are not alone representative. For the practical application of this research question we therefore formed clusters(cp figure 2), and again subjected them to an exploratory factor analysis based on our newly generated three-factor solution. The result is as follows:

TABLE 7: ANALYSIS OF DIFFERENCES IN THE PERCEPTION OF INDUSTRIAL BRAND PERSONALITIES

dimension	brands	performance	Factors	
			Explained proportion of total dispersion	
			sensation	authenticity
focus customized products	Bosch, McKinsey	23,54%	11,90%	19,10%
focus standardized products	Bayer, T- Systems	31,99%	18,55%	7,33%
focus single transaction	McKinsey, Bayer	25,96%	18,55%	12,12%
focus multiple transactions	Bosch, T- Systems	34,70%	15,79%	6,99%
Average over all brands		28,68%	16,87%	10,80%

In transactions dealing with highly customized products the factor “Authenticity” seems to have an above average relevance while the factor “Sensation” plays a secondary role. The reason for this certainly lies in the higher risk involved in the product development. Customers must be provided with an increased measure of honesty and sincerity in order to promote their confidence in the seller.

On the contrary, the communication of efficiency and competence plays the central role when selling standardized products. In this context the ability to keep pace with the speed of technological change must be credibly communicated. Results show, that corresponding items such as “innovative”, “scientific” and “inventive” indeed have a significantly higher factor values when selling standardized compared to customized products (significance level of 99%). As already mentioned, the desire for bonding and personification is also greater in standardized, technology orientated markets. Here products seem to be interchangeable and thus need the differentiation potential of emotional brand values. Consequently, perceived authenticity is less relevant in such transactions because of the increased comparability of standardized goods and services and the smaller investments involved.

Similar results are again reflected in a comparison of single transactions with multiple transactions e.g. in the case of a business relationship. Where a customer enters into a long term relationship with a seller, he must be sure of the seller’s performance and innovative capability. The factor “Authenticity” is possibly less important because in business relationships a certain co-operative security is communicated by the period of such partnerships. Negative influences can be penalized in the coming negotiations since the partners are mutually committed and difficult to substitute.

In single market transactions on the other hand, perceived authenticity is all the more important since, in the sense of a game theoretical approach, in a defined transaction period a deviation from the agreed services for the purpose of maximising one’s own profit seems to make sense to both parties (Williamson, 1985). Consequences such as might be envisaged in long-term business relationships are not to be expected here. Consequently, emotional sympathy values and a high measure of authenticity are deciding factors of brand personality in single transactions. T-tests confirm these results. The average factor values of the factors “Sensation” and “Authenticity” vary between the sections single vs multiple transactions at a significance level of 95%. Because of these findings, our research question Q4 can be answered with a “yes”. There are significant differences in brand personalities in industrial markets.

Q5 posed the question to what extent a variation in the evaluation of brand personalities results among employees or decision makers from different company areas. Since the number of cases was marginal in some of the groups (cp table 5), the two areas “management/senior management” (13 responses) and “purchasing” (15 responses) were examined as examples. After again calculating the average over all brands, the two company areas were evaluated. The results show, that purchasers value the factor “Sensation” significantly more than senior managers. The assumption in section 2 is therefore proved: Clearly not only rational facts govern today’s purchasing decisions. The factor values between both groups vary at a significance level of 99%. Matters of “Performance” and “Authenticity” are highly relevant to management with regard to the taking of optimum decisions. Since significantly different evaluations can also be identified in other company areas, the research question Q5 can also be answered with a positive reply despite the small number of cases: members of buying centres evaluate the dimensions and facets of industrial brand personalities differently.

This last result reflects what is known of the principal agency theory: the fact that buying centre members (and here specifically purchasers) do not supply their own needs but rather the needs of others within the framework of the organizational purchasing process gives rise to a major agency

problem. This is based upon the premise that both the principal (management) and the agent (purchaser) try to maximise their individual profit. Based on the assumption of divergent targets, risk tendencies and existing information symmetries, the danger exists, that the agent will not act in the interests of the principal (Lewin and Johnston, 1996).

Discussion

Theoretical and Managerial Implications

The research extends the conceptualization and measurement of brand personality to the industrial sector. Of key interest to our research was whether the concept of brand personality is also a suitable approach for advanced branding activities in the industrial sector. In this context we analyzed what kind of brand personalities industrial companies possess and how these can be measured. We secondly intended to provide a foundation for a more systematic use of branding strategies in the industrial sector and thus to derive managerial applications. For this, we analyzed differences in industrial brand personalities within the business market. As industrial buying decisions are normally made multi-personally, we further examined to what extent staff from various areas assess brand personalities differently.

Overall our first results indicate that the concept of brand personality, considering the special circumstances of industrial markets, should be considered a suitable instrument for industrial brand management. In this context the most significant concept to date is certainly Aaker's BPS. However this was developed on the basis of the particular characteristics of consumer markets and can thus serve only as a first point of reference. This is confirmed by the fact that the suitability of this scale for industrial markets had to be rejected after an empirical study. Since no further developments for the specific area of industrial marketing exist, this result simultaneously implied the need for an independent brand personality scale for industrial companies. For this reason, the main purpose of our study was to develop a suitable measurement for industrial brand personalities.

Commensurate with the results discussed in section 2, our adapted IBPS reveals that there are both differences and similarities between the brand personalities of consumer brands, corporate brands and industrial brands. In this context the peculiarities of industrial markets and their associated brand functions are to be found in the IBPS: industrial brands must primarily demonstrate performance willingness and efficiency in order to minimize deficiencies of risk and information. These qualities are to be found in the IBPS under the factor "Performance". On the other hand the factor, "Authenticity" reflects the criteria of trust and credibility, which is also of high importance to industrial companies.

The interpretation of factor 2 moreover made clear that also industrial buying decisions are influenced by emotional considerations. Today's industrial markets therefore require a holistic approach incorporating both functional and emotional brand values.

Our study could furthermore reveal that brand personalities are perceived differently according to their specific transaction type. In this context we found out that brand personalities differ in their dimensional characteristics according to the product standardization degree or transactions frequency between a buyer and seller. Finally our study found out that employees from various specialist areas evaluate brands differently, which indicates new fields for research.

These results lead to implications for the brand management of industrial companies: Where a company has a clear concept of its essential organizational aims and values, these can be communicated to the customer with the aid of the IBPS. In doing so, a specific weighting of the three factors seems to be especially important depending on the transaction type generally pursued by the company (cp. figure 1). As a general rule however, industrial brands should be perceived as brands of efficiency and trust. Accordingly, the factors "Performance" and "Authenticity" should be regarded as particularly relevant in deriving a target personality. By means of the emotional factor "Sensation", a further differentiation can be introduced upon increasing similarity of quality levels. In this context industrial companies should begin to recognize that technological competence and product quality are no longer sufficient when differentiation comes down to branding.

In addition, the brand perception by customers can be measured with the help of IBPS, rather like a plan v. current comparison, in order to attain the most profitable brand proposition in the market place. The most important task for this step is to precisely define the desired plan-position in the form of a mission statement. For only with its aid can it be determined, whether the current position is already desirable and, if not, whether the target group can be reached at all with the available resources. Such

investigations must take into account that the perception of brand personalities can vary according to buying centers. Frequent amendments to brand personality profiles should nevertheless be avoided at all costs because these endanger credibility and can lead to an erosion of trust.

Limitations and Future Research

This research represents an initial attempt to extend brand personality measurement to the industrial sector. As with all social science research, however, it is important to recognize the limitations of this project. Although we have tried to interview use only a target group which is relevant to the aims of this study, i.e. business professionals and not to resort to samples from students, who are possibly less familiar with the industrial goods market, the relatively small size of the sample used is another potential limitation. Moreover, the IBPS should be verified by means of a more extensive sample, as a final validation. Thus no final statements, which can serve as generalizations, can be derived due to the exploratory nature of the study.

These limitations provide indications of the need for further research. Besides the corroborative examination of the IBPS with an extended sample size and an amended brand sample, the question arises to what extent brand personalities really do contribute to differentiation in different product markets (e.g. for automotive). This requires a comparison between competing brands. Moreover it should be investigated to what extent brand personalities of industrial companies change in the course of time particularly in what are often long term relationships with a high level of interaction. A test-retest examination could lead to new information in this area. Just as for the BPS, a deeper understanding of the relationship between brand personalities and willingness to pay, customer loyalty and willingness to recommend also needs to be created in the IBPS. In this connection the effect of brand personalities on buying centre decisions should also be examined more. This research gap seems especially important when one takes into account the marked variations in buying centre evaluations shown in this study. Increasing internationalization and the worldwide activities of most industrial companies finally also raise the question of the replicability of the IBPS in an intercultural context. The limitations of the BPS indicated in section 3 leads to the conclusion that errors due to intercultural generalization could arise with the IBPS.

In short, despite the use of different methods and sample groups, this study is limited by the specific organizations selected, the relative small sample and its explorative character. Further exploration and description of key personality factors to describe a broad array of organizations and situations are needed to advance brand management in the industrial sector.

Main Contribution

Industrial brand management is still at its starting point. This is certainly due to the fact that there is still a lack of both understanding of the special characteristics of industrial brands and concepts that help to build up and maintain a strong brand in the context of industrial markets. Our adaptation of the concept of brand personality offers potential new ways for industrial companies to strengthen their brands and market positions. By recognizing that current and potential costumers can view industrial companies as unique personalities, industrial marketers may be able to match their company's brand personality better with the preferences of their relevant target groups and to differentiate themselves in the increasingly crowded marketplace. Thus industrial brand personality might serve as an invaluable means in the brand management of industrial organizations.

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