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Pierre Valette-Florence, Rita Valette-Florence

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*A new affinity measure based on the personality of brands and
newspapers/magazine brands: a French Perspective*

VALETTE-FLORENCE Rita

VALETTE-FLORENCE Pierre



Unité Mixte de Recherche CNRS / Université Pierre Mendès France Grenoble 2

150 rue de la Chimie – BP 47 – 38040 GRENOBLE cedex 9

Tél. : 04 76 63 53 81 Fax : 04 76 54 60 68



Grenoble
Université Pierre-Mendès-France
Sciences sociales & humaines

A new affinity measure based on the personality of brands and newspaper/magazine brands: a French Perspective

Valette-Florence R. Associate Professor, Licence Pôle de Gestion, UPMF & CERAG, Grenoble, France
Valette-Florence P. Professor, IAE & CERAG, Grenoble, France

In this article we propose a new affinity measure by calculating affinity through the distance between the personality of newspapers/magazines and the personality of brands. By quantifying the proximity between a brand and a press title, we can rank these titles by order of affinity in terms of personality profiles and construct a media plan that can maximize affinity with the brand in terms of personality. Our results show that such an implicit measure of perceived brand-magazine associations perfectly corresponds to an explicit measure of the relevance of their association and clearly outperforms the consumption affinity approach.

Introduction

The targets of advertising have been traditionally defined through socio-demographic criteria such as age, gender and social class. These criteria serve as a means primarily for reaching a brand's existing or potential customers as effectively as possible. By using a media market information system such as SIMM¹, affinity indices can be directly calculated on the basis of the brand's self-declared consumers' characteristics, notably in terms of consumption behaviors for each title. Such an Affinity Index is an "efficiency indicator" usually relied on in media planning. It represents the weight of a specific target audience compared to the total population of a specific medium. However, given equal impact, cost and affinity, not all magazines provide the advertisement with the same effectiveness (Kusumoto, 2002). In addition, the consumer behavior literature has shown that self-image congruence, notably with regard to brand personality, helps explain and predict different facets of consumer behavior. However, to date, application of self-congruence theories to media selection has been very limited.

In this paper we put forward a new measure of affinity between a magazine and a brand by turning to the concept of personality. Ever since the landmark paper by Aaker (1997), there have been many studies of brand personality and several scales have been developed holistically or in different sectors (e.g. Geuens, Weijters and De Wulf, 2009; d'Astous and Boujbel, 2007) for taking it into account. Yet magazines too may be viewed as brands in their own right, as has been shown by the recent work of Valette Florence and de Barnier (2011, 2012).

The present study shows that by means of a "hybrid" personality scale, applicable both to commercial brands and to magazines we can thus determine, from among a set of magazines, which have the closest personality profiles to the brand's personality profile. By quantifying the proximity between a brand and a number of magazine/newspaper titles likely to carry the brand's advertising, we can then rank these titles by order of affinity in terms of personality profiles and construct a media plan

with those magazines/newspapers that maximizes affinity with the brand in terms of personality (subsequently referred to as personality affinity). The aim of this paper is to show how a measure of personality can be used to help make media selections. To demonstrate this, we show that an implicit measure of perceived brand-magazine associations from the distance between their brand personality profiles perfectly corresponds to an explicit measure of the relevance of their association and clearly outperforms the SIMM approach (subsequently referred to as consumption affinity).

The remainder of this article first summarizes the literature related to self-brand congruity, brand personality affinity and consumer affinity. Then, it presents the methodology and discusses the main results. Finally, the findings, limitations, and further research opportunities appear in the conclusion.

Theoretical framework

Self-congruity

In consumer behavior, self-concept has been advanced as a useful construct for understanding and explaining consumer choice behavior. Researchers have shown that consumers prefer products or brands that are similar to how they see or would like to see themselves (e.g. Sirgy, 1982). Self-congruity theory (Govers and Schoormans, 2005) postulates that a consumer tends to select products or brands that correspond to one's self-concept (Sirgy et al., 1997). The self-brand congruity hypothesis is founded upon the premise that consumers use brands to communicate their self-concepts (e.g. Escalas and Bettman, 2003; Sirgy, 1982). The core point of this approach is that material objects and possessions such as brands can serve as symbols or signs that represent socially constructed meanings and effectively reflect the owners' self-identity and relations to others (e.g. Dittmar, 1992). More precisely, the self-congruity theory proposes that consumer behavior is determined, in part, by a cognitive matching between value-expressive attributes of a product. In consumer behavior literature, a lot of recent researches (e.g. Usakli and Baloglu, 2011; Sung and Choi, 2012) have concentrated on how the personality of a brand enables consumers to express their own self.

Brand personality affinity

The main measurement scales of brand personality were first developed in North America, in particular following Aaker's (1997) seminal work based on the fact that brands are personified and sometimes "humanized". Since then, various personality scales have been developed in diverse areas of application and many cultural settings (e.g. Milas and Mlačić, 2007). This profusion of researches had recently led Valette-Florence and de Barnier (2011, 2012) to propose a distinction between macro and micro approaches to brand personality. Holistic approaches are viewable as a macro form of brand personality, for which different brand domains are grouped together, such as tangible goods, services, and the media and telecom operators in Aaker's (1997)

¹ Système Information Media Marché.

pioneering scale. The second approach is associated with the micro character of brand personality and offers a viewpoint specific to the area studied, as in d'Astous and Levesque (2001) for retail chains or Venable, Rose, Bush and Gilbert, (2005) for non-profit organizations. This view amounts to considering that brand personality may be understood at two, potentially complementary levels. At a macro level, it involves looking for cross-cultural and inter-category product dimensions, of which the Geuens et al. (2009) scale is the most recent and revealing example. At a micro level, the study of brand personality takes place within a quite specific area of investigation, leading to the generation of items or dimensions not necessarily found in macro inventories. This perspective has been adopted by Valette-Florence and de Barnier (2011), who propose in a French setting a "hybrid" personality scale jointly applicable to print media brands and commercial brands.

Consumption affinity

Traditional studies of print media are based on knowledge of their readerships in terms of reading habits, socio-demographic characteristics and consumption characteristics. In these traditional approaches, the proximity between the media can be calculated on the basis of duplication (percentage of readers common to two titles), distances between socio-demographic profiles or distances in terms of consumption profiles. These standard criteria do not specify, describe and differentiate the personality of readers or identify their areas of interest or their "reading climate" (Agostini, 1989).

In fact, the first studies dealing with the reading climate and centers of interest appeared in France in the mid 70's and were awarded at that time by the "Fondation Marcel Dassault - Jours de France" prize. These studies, measuring 109 areas of interest, 76 opinions indicative of the personality of readers, and 19 questions about their opinions on TV, radio, magazines and newspapers turned out to be highly discriminant between all types of media encompassed. However, it is only very recently that the "editorial climate" has been recognized as a judgmental heuristic that might influence the evaluations of the ads within a given print media brand (Chang, 2011). However, this influence has only been studied in terms of induced affect and not from an evaluative standpoint as consumers do when they assess brand personality.

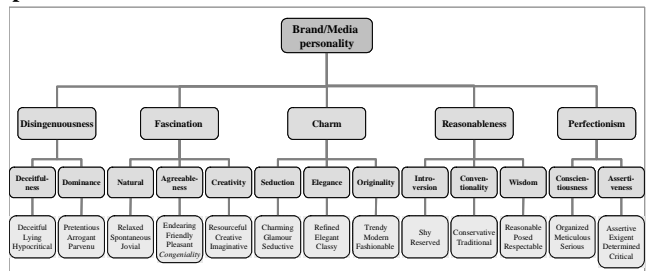
Following these authors and the self-congruity hypothesis, we postulate that the personality affinity will correspond more closely to a direct measure of the pertinence of associations between brands than that of consumption affinity.

Methodology and results

Measurement scale

From a practical standpoint, the previously elaborated theoretical framework justifies using a "hybrid" measurement scale of brand personality applicable to both brands (of tangible goods and services) and print media brands for accurate measurement of their proximity in terms of personality profiles. In the present study, brand personality was measured on the scale specifically developed by Valette-Florence et de Barnier (2011), which is validated in a French context and is applicable both to print media brands and commercial brands. This new scale has been carefully developed and validated on more than 5 successive data samples. As Figure 1 shows, this scale has a 5-dimensional structure of order 2 containing 13 variables of order 1 and 39 items.

Figure 1: Hybrid personality jointly applicable to brands and print media brands



Data sample and scale validation

Data was collected by means of the panel of the French press group, FigaroMedias, from 1061 respondents who were the main readers of two print media brands and actual consumers of two commercial brands. These groupings, produced by the FigaroMedias marketing department², selected the brands Fiat and Azzaro with the two daily newspapers Figaro Quotidien and L'Equipe. Two other brands, Nokia and Société Générale were associated with the news magazines Paris-Match and Figaro Magazine. Finally, Nivea and Carte d'Or were linked to the women's magazines Elle and Madame Figaro. Thus the first group of respondents, for example, was both mainly readers of Figaro Quotidien and L'Equipe (in addition to being occasional readers of the other press titles) and consumers of Fiat and Azzaro. First of all, the used brand personality scale was validated by means of a Partial Least Squares confirmatory factor analysis with a systematic Bootstrap procedure of 500 sample replications. All the corresponding reliabilities (ranging from 0.686 up to 0.880) and extracted variances (ranging from 0.510 up to 0.801) proved to be fairly above the recommended thresholds. Besides the fact that the PLS SEM approach doesn't require any distributional assumption, it has been selected since individual latent factor scores can be easily computed and used in any subsequent analyses.

Comparison with consumption affinity

Using the hybrid brand personality measurement scale presented above, we were able to calculate the Euclidean distance between these brands, computed thanks to the latent scores on the 13 personality dimensions. The result gave 36 brand personality affinities (6x6) that then allowed us to rank them in order of decreasing order. Table 1 shows that the ranking based on consumption affinity is not the same as the ranking based on personality affinity. For example, for the Nokia brand, Madame Figaro is ranked highest in consumption affinity while Figaro Magazine comes highest in terms of personality affinity. On the basis of personality affinity, Nokia should choose the Figaro Magazine or Quotidien, whereas Société Générale, Fiat and Azzaro should choose L'Equipe or Paris Match. Nivea should favor Figaro Quotidien or Figaro Magazine and Carte d'Or should use Paris Match and Elle.

We should emphasize at this point that only certain combinations were explicitly tested with the consumers. These are represented by the grey boxes in Table 1 and correspond to readers and consumers of the four brands concerned (2 magazine/daily newspaper titles and 2 brands). To show the lack of significant

² On the basis of the FCB Grid Think/Feel Products and managerial habit (for instance, Fiat is mainly advertised in either Figaro Quotidien or L'Equipe and very scarcely in the others press titles).

correlation between the ranking by personality affinity and the ranking by consumption affinity, Table 2 presents the Kendall correlations. We see that none of these correlations is significant at the 5% risk threshold. These results indicate that the rankings in terms of personality affinity and in terms of consumption affinity are not identical and thus measure different kinds of association.

Table 1: Ranking of six magazines/newspapers by personality affinity and consumption affinity

Brands	Ranks	Mme Figaro	Elle	Figaro Quotidien	L'Equipe	Figaro Magazine	Paris Match
Nokia	Personality	3	4	2	6	1	5
	SIMM	1	5	4	3	2	6
Société Générale	Personality	6	3	4	1	5	2
	SIMM	3	6	4	1	2	5
Fiat	Personality	6	3	4	1	5	2
	SIMM	6	5	4	2	3	1
Azzaro	Personality	6	3	4	2	5	1
	SIMM	2	1	6	5	4	3
Nivea	Personality	4	6	1	5	2	3
	SIMM	6	1	2	3	5	4
Carte d'Or	Personality	5	2	4	6	3	1
	SIMM	3	6	5	1	2	4

Table 2: Kendall correlations between rankings by personality affinity and by consumption affinity

	Nokia	S. Générale	Fiat	Azzaro	Nivea	Carte d'or
Correlation	0.33	-0.67	-0.47	-0.67	-0.20	-0.47
Risk threshold (p)	0.17	0.42	0.09	0.42	0.29	0.09

In order to obtain a more comprehensive view of the respective positioning of the brands and magazines/newspapers, we computed the average Euclidean distances between brand personalities and magazine/newspaper personalities, calculated on basis of all the respondents. We see in Table 3 that Société Générale is the brand whose personality profile is generally furthest away from the magazine/newspaper personality profiles, whereas some brands are close to particular titles, such as Fiat to L'Equipe and Paris Match.

Table 3 Mean distances between the personalities of brands and press titles

Mean distances	Mme Figaro	Elle	Figaro Quotidien	L'Equipe	Figaro Magazine	Paris Match
Nokia	36.356	37.461	31.472	56.159	30.088	40.406
Société Générale	96.942	81.027	86.575	36.853	92.367	49.591
Fiat	66.983	49.145	61.858	30.191	63.327	30.740
Azzaro	63.916	47.131	61.959	40.214	62.814	34.838
Nivea	51.677	54.478	37.875	54.377	37.940	47.812
Carte d'Or	45.935	38.079	43.222	49.608	41.589	36.456

Comparison of the Relevance of Personality Affinity and Consumption Affinity

To provide this operation with external validity, a direct measure of the relevance of the associations between a brand and a print media brand was investigated by adapting three of the five items proposed by Simmons and Becker-Olsen (2006). This step involved asking respondents by means of direct questions to assess the plausibility of the look of an advertisement for a given brand in a magazine/newspaper. Only those associations pertaining to the simultaneous consumption of the four brands mentioned in Table 1 were investigated. As shown in Table 4, an analysis of variance, accompanied by a Duncan's test, reveals that there were

statistically significant differences between most pairs of brands/print media brands.

Table 4 Duncan's test on the direct measurement of associations (normalized values 0-100)

Direct measurement of associations		
Linkages	Values	Significance
SG in FigMag	55.42	0.15
Azzaro in FigQuot	55.69	
Fiat in FigQuot	59.60	1.00
Fiat in Equipe	62.27	0.08
SG in Paris-Match	63.38	
Azzaro in Equipe	68.29	0.12
Carte Or in Mme Figaro	70.08	
Nivea in Elle	70.11	
Carte Or in Elle	70.37	0.09
Nokia in Paris-Match	73.09	
Nivea in Figaro	75.28	
Nokia in FigMag	79.12	1.00

All the associations are significantly different except for that of Carte d'Or with Elle and Madame Figaro (which have similar scores of 70.08 and 70.37 respectively). Comparison with the previously presented proximities reveals an entirely consistent pattern, thus giving the results external validity. The only exception concerns the plausibility of the association of Carte d'Or with Elle and Madame Figaro, which by contrast clearly favors Elle in terms of the distances calculated (38.079 as against 45.935). Finally, a complementary regression analysis confirms that the distances between the brands in terms of personality predict well the direct measure of association proposed³. Thus, personality affinity seems to be a good indicator of the affinity perceived by consumers between a brand and a magazine/newspaper brand.

Discussion, Limitations and Possible Future Research

For each of the groupings of brands and magazines we show, firstly, that the rankings in terms of brand personality affinity and consumption affinity are statistically different and thus allow different types of association to be envisaged than those commonly in use in media planning. Secondly, we prove that an implicit measure of perceived brand-magazine associations derived from the distance between the brand personality profiles and those of the magazines perfectly correspond to an explicit measure of the relevance of the associations between brand and print media brands.

Hence, this study offers an innovative approach to media planning, which traditionally is rooted in the selection of media on the basis of objective descriptive variables that are generally socio-demographic. Based on a more qualitative and symbolic measure of pertinence, our proposed provide a more qualitative understanding of the proximity between brand/print media brand pairings. As such, the hybrid brand personality scale we relied on, applicable to both newspaper/magazine brands and to the advertiser brands, has the advantage of being able to explain how

³ Adjusted R² = 43%, F = 12.251, p = 0.007; standardized coefficients = 0.429, t = 3.487, p = 0.007 for the distance between brands in terms of personality profiles.

this proximity is assessed with regards to which facets a print media brand and an advertiser brand are closest or most differentiated.

On a theoretical level the results also validate the concept of implicit meaning transfer. In all cases, the associations between brands match those obtained for a direct and explicit measurement of the relevance of their associations. This innovative finding proves that the match in terms of personality between an advertiser brand and a print media brand implicitly corresponds closely to a value judgment made explicitly about the nature of this association.

At a managerial level, now that there is conversational advertising of brands with Web 2.0, personality affinity offers two advantages. The first suggests a more predictive character than a link based simply on past behavior. Indeed, the calculation of consumption affinity is currently unsatisfactory in terms of predictability, because managers work on the assumption that former consumers will buy the brand again whenever they are appealed to by that brand. Yet consumers are increasingly disloyal and past behavior is less and less a guide to future behavior (Belch, Belch and Purani K., 2010). The second advantage lies in the widening of the target. Currently, managers work primarily in the zone of current purchasers, since they target only those media which have the highest rates of purchasers of the advertiser brand. But what about the prospects for a brand that wants to expand to other targets? In this sense, the concept of personality affinity goes beyond the traditional approach since the calculation of the proximity based on personality affinity overcomes the limitations of the traditional approach of targeting former purchasers: it can now cover both purchasers and non-purchasers. In this respect, it opens up new fields of expression to print media brands, particularly in regard to increasing their impact, and optimizing the targeting of prospects.

As with any research, the present study has its limitations. The first concerns the limited number of associations actually measured in the study. The use of FigaroMedias panels also probably biased the results in favor of that group's brands. Furthermore, the level of involvement with respect to brands, as well as a more holistic measure of attitude towards them, were not taken into account. Finally, it was not possible to compare the results obtained with an actual measurement of purchasing patterns, following a real advertising campaign by these advertiser brands.

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