5 brand personality

EB335 DESIGNING CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS
individual ‘personality’

The five factors

The Big Five factors and their constituent traits can be summarized as (OCEAN):

- **Openness to experience** – (inventive/curious vs. consistent/cautious). Appreciation for art, emotion, adventure, unusual ideas, curiosity, and variety of experience.

- **Conscientiousness** – (efficient/organized vs. easy-going/careless). A tendency to show self-discipline, act dutifully, and aim for achievement; planned rather than spontaneous behaviour.

- **Extraversion** – (outgoing/energetic vs. solitary/reserved). Energy, positive emotions, surgency, and the tendency to seek stimulation in the company of others.

- **Agreeableness** – (friendly/compassionate vs. cold/unkind). A tendency to be compassionate and cooperative rather than suspicious and antagonistic towards others.

- **Neuroticism** – (sensitive/nervous vs. secure/confident). A tendency to experience unpleasant emotions easily, such as anger, anxiety, depression, or vulnerability.

There is debate about whether a perceived ‘brand personality’ follows the way we perceive individual personalities

Consider another huge study of cross-cultural personality differences, led by David Schmitt at Bradley University and published in 2007, that involved over 17,000 people from 56 different nations around the world. Again, between-nation variation emerged in average personality. For example, the highest average scores for trait Neuroticism were found in Japan and Argentina while the lowest were found in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Slovenia. Meanwhile, the highest scoring nations for Agreeableness, on average, were the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Jordan, while Japan and Lithuania scored the lowest.
brand personality

- as perceived by customers, & as understood & projected by a business
- perceptions amongst customers may vary across markets, segments, time
- e.g., Clarks shoes across countries, Dr Martens over time
- firms may lose control over the cultural meanings & perceived personality of their brands
- much corporate communication design is about trying to define, position and project a brand’s personality in public space (virtual & actual)
- increasing attention given to ‘co-creation’ of a brand personality with customers and other stakeholders in a firm
brand personality expressed

• through overall design and production ethos
• the materiality and aesthetics of the product
• values, visual and other language embodied in corporate communications
• associations that a firm chooses to have with prominent personalities, subcultures, other products and brands
2. brand narratives

EXAMPLES
brand complexity

- A firm may hold a diverse portfolio of brands (each with a distinctive personality) but also be noted for a particular ethos and/or have its own brand personality.

- E.g., Shiseido.

- Luxottica has little reputation outside Italy but is the largest owner of leading sunglasses and sports eyewear in the world (e.g., Oakley, Ray Ban, Persol, Prada and many other fashion brands).

- Portfolios of brand, and particular product personalities.

- E.g., Nissan’s past and current Z, GTR, more recent Cube, X Trail, the Datsun brand abroad, the more recent luxury brand Infiniti.
Japanese brands

Two step process in defining a particular brand personality for Japan-origin enterprises
Nissan case

• Japan’s first car manufacturer, with a history of some iconic products - mass and boutique - but by 1999 was facing bankruptcy

• Renault equity investment & former (!) CEO Carlos Ghosn brought transformative leadership but which emphasised that ‘the answers lie within’

• new strategic focus on design, with Chief Creative Officer position created and filled by Shiro Nakamura

• reviewed Nissan’s brand personality, strengths and weaknesses, ‘DNA’ as both Nissan and as a Japanese-origin enterprise

• sought key words to articulate the complex bundle of attributes that was Nissan’s ‘brand equity’ amongst current and former customers, employees and others
The ‘iconic’ products might only be a small part of total past production but ‘brand communities’ often have shared understandings of what products encapsulate a firm’s ethos at its best.
Nissan GT-R Nismo revealed

Nissan’s highly-anticipated GT-R Nismo has broken cover ahead of its official debut at the Tokyo motor show.

The most extreme version of the Japanese supercar has been developed for even greater performance, with its 3.8-litre twin-turbo V6 developing an additional 40kW that takes its peak output to 444kW and slashes its sprint from 0-100km/h to around 2.0sec.

The power boost is a result of modifications to the intake system, a free-flowing exhaust and larger turbo chargers.

Working with the extra grunt, Nissan has further honed the GT-R’s all-wheel drive chassis with light weight 20-inch alloys, modified suspension components with a stiffer Race Plus setting and numerous aerodynamic tweaks - including revised front and rear bumpers, deeper side skirts and a fixed rear wing - for added downforce.
brands beyond control