



## **Leadership in Brand Personalities**

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**April 2015**

This project was submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Graduate Liberal Studies in the Graduate School of Duke University.

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## **Abstract**

Through a case study approach, this paper explores the existence of leadership personality traits in what has come to be known as brand personalities. If leaders are acknowledged for possessing admirable characteristics that generate loyalty and a following, then brand personalities likely possess leadership traits, as creating a loyal following is a common goal within the practice of marketing. Concepts of brand personality, corporate brand personality, and leadership personality are examined and later compared through the use of five major personality dimensions to uncover any connections between the entities. The case studies illustrate that an actual person, in conjunction with a brand identity, can effectively personify a brand. Promoting company founders, executives, employees, or celebrity endorsers as brand ambassadors can achieve this personification. I analyze the personalities associated with financially successful and well-established brands to determine the most powerful personality traits of the brand and whether or not they pertain what have been considered well-established leadership traits. I find that leadership traits can be found in brand personalities but these traits vary across industries.

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## **Introduction**

Branding is everywhere. The universities people attend, the smartphones they use, the cars they drive, and the clothes they wear all make statements about who those individuals are, who they want to be, and how they want to be perceived. These associations contribute to the concept of branding, and it is powerful and becoming increasingly important for business marketers, entrepreneurs, and researchers to understand. Brands are simply the perception someone holds in their head, both factually and emotionally, about an individual, organization, product, service, cause, or idea (McLaughlin, 2011). Hearing a specific name, or seeing a specific logo, design, term, or slogan can trigger these perceptions in an individual. Similar to a reputation, brands help provide piece of mind and safety to a consumer while also creating differentiation between products allowing particular ones to stand out.

Beyond the utilitarian purpose of a product or service, the determining factor for a consumer, when deciding whether or not to purchase, lies in the branding. For example, the utilitarian purpose of a watch is to tell time, yet people purchase watches for several alternate reasons such as cost, quality, a symbol of status, or a form of self-expression, all of which are defined by the brand. The use of a brand allows people to express their personality and ideal values through ways in which the brand identifies itself, such as its values, beliefs, and perceptions.

The purpose of this paper is threefold: first, I will explore the concept of branding by examining what has come to be known as brand personality; second, I will extend the discussion of brand personality to the building of corporate brands; and finally, I will show how corporate brands can be strengthened by linking corporate brands to one or more of the five major personality traits. Brands do not in themselves

have personalities or act like human subjects possessing leadership traits. Brands gain personalities through association with real people, some famous and others not. By examining brands in these three distinct ways, we will come to a better understanding of how brands operate on consumers.

## **Brand Personality: Literature Review**

### **Introduction:**

Brand personality is defined as a set of human characteristics attributed to a brand name or product. It is the way a brand expresses and represents itself on an emotional level in the eyes of the public. A standard question that summarizes the concept of brand personality is, "If a brand, for instance Apple or Nike, were to come to life as a person, how would that person be described?" The traits used to describe a brand add a human element, or personality, that gives people something that they can identify with and relate to, similar to a relationship with an actual person. If a relationship is viewed as an interdependent entity that involves some sort of connection or bond, then people can have emotional relationships with brands just like they do with real-life individuals (Villarica, 2012). When consumers trust and identify with a brand and its personality, they develop loyalty, and with loyalty comes increased sales and financial success.

The personality of a brand can be described similarly to the personality of an actual person by using traits. For example, consumer studies show that the personality traits associated with the soft drink brand Coca-Cola are cool, happy, fun, and loving (Aaker, 1997). The company name, industry, logo, slogan, mission statement, or people associated with the brand over time all contribute to the brand's personality, in different amounts. Brand personality is important for marketers to understand because people naturally imbue brands with human characteristics. Consumers can think of brands as if they were celebrities, historical figures, or everyday people depending on how the brand projects its personality. Brands can be personified through the use of



actual people, product anthropomorphization<sup>1</sup> (e.g. M&M's and Jolly Green Giant), and to a lesser extent slogans, logos, fonts, and other visual imagery. A strong brand personality is crucial for a company's success because it affects the strength of the relationships that it has with consumers (Staplehurst & Charoenwongse, 2012).

The development of a brand personality revolves around the company's target audience, the intended recipients of a product, advertisement, or message. Successful brands project personalities that the target audience is likely to identify with or relate to. For example, if a clothing brand displays a personality with traits of excitement, youthfulness, imaginative, and spirited, then consumers of this brand likely possess, desire, or admire these traits. The personality of a brand enables consumers to better express themselves, their ideal self, or a specific dimension of the self by connecting with the brand personality traits (Belk, 1988). Therefore, the greater the congruity between a brand's personality and a personality that describes a consumer's actual or ideal self, the greater the preference for the brand (Malhotra, 1988). For example, Red Bull endorsed athletes to project the brand personality as innovative, individual, non-conformist, unpredictable, and humorous; common traits shared by its target audience, individuals aged 14-29 (Keller, 2008). The target audience of Red Bull identifies with these personality traits, and is more likely to prefer the brand and express themselves through product consumption.

The majority of brands intentionally exhibit positive personality traits (versus negative) to attract consumers as opposed to repel them (Aaker, 1997). Though brands obviously try to project positive characteristics, the most successful brands match their brand personality with their actions. For example, consumers will hold brands as

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<sup>1</sup> To attribute human form or personality to.

suspicious if they project themselves as honest, and then use misleading advertisements. The establishment of a brand personality is powerful. A personality incorporated by a brand can assist in consumer preference, usage of the brand, and consumer trust and loyalty, while simultaneously providing a basis for product differentiation (Freling & Forbes, 2005).

Brand researchers state that brand personality helps distinguish competing brands from one another (Aaker, 1997). For example, a brand that is trustworthy and reassures safety is considered one of the most important factors to consumers when choosing an airline company, but it can be assumed that all airline companies demonstrate this. Therefore, specific traits are what differentiate competing companies. Southwest Airlines, for example, distinguishes itself from other airlines by projecting a fun and spirited personality opposed to one that is boring or unexciting. Brand equity<sup>2</sup> and association becomes more favorable, stronger, and unique when brand personality is well defined and congruent with a company's values (Keller, 1993).

Consumers consider a brand's personality when they: (1) have little or no experience with a product; or (2) have insufficient time or interest to evaluate the intrinsic attributes (Freling & Forbes, 2005). Without a proper assessment of a product, consumers often rely on brand personality as a proxy for product quality. Brand personality serves as an extrinsic cue to, or surrogate for, intrinsic product attributes and product quality (Jacoby, 1971). For example, Nike's advertisements of elite athletes with high-achieving personalities promote the high quality of their running gear.

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<sup>2</sup> The commercial value that consumers place on the brand name of a particular product or service.

### **Brand Personality Studies:**

A research study conducted at the University of Kentucky by business professors Traci Freling and Lukas Forbes (2005) measured the impact of brand personality on consumers. More specifically, Freling and Forbes looked to assess the degree to which brand personality influenced product evaluations. The study was conducted by creating a fictitious water bottle company named "Jatim," that participants would evaluate. Participants were shown one of six possible displays of Jatim, all of which showed product information (i.e. size dimensions, and nutritional data). However, all displays except one contained a different set of made up consumer comments relating to Jatim such as, "I drink Jatim because it quenches my thirst." The consumer comments served as the source for the brand's personality emphasizing a specific personality trait per comment. The blank display possessed only product information and non-emotional consumer comments (i.e. no brand personality). The results of the study show that subjects had a higher rate of response and favorability to the Jatim brand when exposed to product information *and* brand personality. Those with only product information reported being more skeptical about the brand (Freling & Forbes, 2005). The results of this study shows that brand personality has a major effect on consumer opinions and product evaluations. Therefore, it is important for companies to establish a brand personality that consumers can identify with. Without a brand personality, consumer opinions are more negative, and can result in decreased sales.

Another study conducted by marketing and management professors Nathalie Fleck, Géraldine Michel, and Valérie Zeitoun (2013) examined the effectiveness of brand personification through the use of ordinary employees, CEOs, and celebrities in advertisements. Participants of this study, representative of consumers, were shown

images of advertisements with celebrities, employees, or CEOs and were asked questions such as, “what do you think about brands that communicate through employees or celebrities? If these brands were people, what would be their personality?” The results of the study determined that celebrity endorsements increase a brand’s importance and salience from the consumer’s perspective by presenting an aspirational personality. Additionally, participants perceived brands endorsed by its own employees as having a more empathetic and credible brand personality. However, the use of employees to humanize a brand was not viewed as exciting or persuasive by participants and was held with skepticism. Specifically, the authenticity of the employee came off as fake and was confused for a paid actor by certain participants. Lastly, brands that used CEOs to endorse its products were perceived as having a more admirable and inspirational personality. The CEOs shown in the advertisements were perceived as credible, authentic, ordinary people with an extraordinary story (Fleck, Michel, & Zeitoun, 2013). Overall, the study conducted by Fleck, Michel, and Zeitoun demonstrates the unique effects that employees, CEOs, or celebrities can have on a brand’s personality when used in advertisements.

Finally, a study conducted by branding professors Laure Ambroise, Gaëlle Sohier, Pierre Florence, and Noel Alber (2014) examined the extent to which a celebrity endorser’s personality transfers into the brand’s personality and whether or not it effects brand attachment or purchase intentions. In other words, if a brand associates itself with a celebrity through endorsement or co-branding<sup>3</sup>, to what degree would the personality of the celebrity affect the brand’s personality? For example, internationally renowned actress Penelope Cruz endorses cosmetics company L’Oreal. Cruz’s

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<sup>3</sup> A mutually beneficial paring of two or more brands

personality is sophisticated, energetic, friendly, and interesting, and these traits transfer into L'Oreal's brand personality through association. Celebrity endorsers provide a way to humanize a brand and develop an identity through which consumers can relate to or aspire to relate to (Ambroise, Shoier, Florence, & Alber, 2014).

The most successful endorsements occur when a celebrity's personality and background is relevant to the brand's industry and congruent with its values. This study was conducted by having participants assess the personality of two brands of jeans: Levi's and Abercrombie & Fitch. Each brand was paired with celebrities Madonna and Vanessa Paradis as hypothetical endorsers. Participants were asked to first assess the personality of both celebrities, and then assess the brand personality after being shown advertisements of either Madonna, Paradis, or an anonymous model wearing the jeans. The results of this study concluded that the personalities of celebrity endorsers do transfer into a brand's personality. Specifically, consumers perceived both Levi's and Abercrombie & Fitch as more extraverted after being shown advertisements with Madonna. The results also showed that the impact of celebrity endorsers on brand attachment and purchase intentions is dependent on the brand's popularity. For example, in this study, Levi's was a more popular brand amongst the participants, and incorporating the personality of a celebrity increased brand attachment but not purchase intentions. Contrarily, Abercrombie & Fitch, the less popular brand, showed increased purchase intentions but not brand attachment. Overall, this study demonstrates that the personality of an individual can be transferred into the personality of an associated brand. The personality of a celebrity is important to consider because if consumers perceive the personality as negative, then the brand can potentially be damaged from the association.

### **Limitations of Brand Personality Studies:**

Brand personality isn't equivalent to human personality. When comparing the two, the relationship isn't completely congruent. Brand personalities do contain traits that are used in psychological and behavioral assessments, but these traits are still ultimately representative of a company or product, not a person. Further research is needed to better understand how brand personality information is processed from a consumer perspective (i.e. whether or not consumers invest time and energy in understanding a brand or their interactions with it) (Aaker, 1997). In addition, many of the research studies conducted do not consider factors differing across cultures, which could ultimately influence a brand's personality perception. As there are many global brands, (e.g. McDonalds, Nike, Samsung, etc.) this is important to consider.

If a brand personality operates much like a human personality, then marketers should emulate characteristics that we admire in people, particularly characteristics of leaders. If a leader can generate respect, loyalty, and a following, then it would seem beneficial for corporations to consider implementing these traits into their own brand personality to ensure success. By looking at past and present examples of branding efforts of large US companies, the question that this paper seeks to explore is whether or not leadership traits exist in successful brand personalities.

## Corporate Brand Personality: Literature Review

### Introduction:

Corporate brand personality is a broad variation of brand personality specific to a company rather than its products. This is expressed by the human characteristics, or traits, of the founders, executives, and employees of the corporation. More specifically, corporate brand personality is made up of the organization's history, culture, values, and beliefs, and is personified through its staff. A corporate brand is distinct from a product brand because it encompasses a much wider range of associations (Keller, 2006). For example, a company like Proctor & Gamble (P&G) owns many brands (e.g. Tide, Duracell, Nyquil, Crest, Bounty, and Gillette) each with unique brand personalities. Specifically, laundry detergent brand Tide, projects an innovative, family-oriented, and sincere brand personality (Dyer, Dalzell, & Olegario, 2004). However, P&G as a company projects a corporate brand personality of responsible, dedicated, and caring, based on its commitment to helping consumers live better lives through the use of its high-quality products. In sum, a product brand is defined by what it does and what it represents, whereas a corporate brand is defined by what it does and who it is at its core (Keller & Richey, 2006).

The corporate brand personality serves as the foundation for its brand personalities through its beliefs and values. For example, if a company claims environmental sustainability as a core value, then the company's brand personality should reflect this by emphasizing its responsible use of recycled materials, organic produce, etc. The congruity between corporate brand personality and brand personality is known as integrated marketing communications (IMC), a variety of

communication disciplines (i.e. advertising, sales, public relations, digital marketing, etc.). IMC is beneficial because it provides clarity, consistency, and maximum communicative impact (Grewal & Levy, 2011). Corporate personality begins with company employees who help bring the personality to life. Corporations typically hire employees who model its brands and reflect company values. For several firms, the employees are the face of company from the perspective of its consumers. Therefore, it is imperative for companies to embody a corporate brand personality that employees can follow and embrace, as well as a personality that consumers will admire and support.

Successful companies shape their corporate brand personalities by their mission statement<sup>1</sup> and core values (i.e. sustainability, environmentally conscious, etc.), which are congruently reflected within the products created. Marketing communications experts Helen Stuart and Gayle Kerr claim, “If a strong corporate identity is a shared belief among all the managers . . . what we are, what we are trying to position ourselves as, then it flows through to training of staff to pricing strategies to marketing, advertising and that sort of thing” (Stuart & Kerr, 1999). Embracing shared beliefs within a corporation is considered ‘living the brand’ in which employees behave in a manner to properly represent the company’s shared values and culture (Stuart, 2012). Jonathan Schroeder, a communications professor at the Rochester Institute of Technology claims that corporate brand personalities can also emerge as a result of interaction between the firm and its stakeholders (Witzel, 2010). In sum, interactions, associations, and partnerships with other companies and public figures can also affect corporate brand personality.

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<sup>1</sup> A declaration of purpose or reason for existence.



Executives and founders help develop a company's culture and reputation, which ultimately provide the general framework for the corporate brand personality. According to a study conducted by Weber Shandwick, a public relations firm that specializes in brand management, the reputation of corporate executives contributes to 49% of the company's perceived brand personality. The study was conducted amongst credible business executives of companies worth \$500 million or more with diverse consumers, and applied in both developed and emerging markets, making it clear that executives effect corporate reputation by a noteworthy amount ("The Company Behind the Brand," 2011). For example, the companies Enron, Arthur Anderson, Ratners, Planet Hollywood, Fashion Café, Hear'Say, and Guiltless Gourmet all became bankrupted companies because of the actions and reputations of its' corporate executives. Specifically, Enron's executives lied about company accounts, Ratners' CEO slandered his own company's products, and the founders of Fashion Café repeatedly insulted its employees during public events (Haig, 2011). The Weber Shandwick study also found that 60% of a company's brand equity is derived from its corporate reputation, illustrating the powerful impact of a company's perception.

### **Corporate Brand Personality Studies:**

Marketing professors Michael Merz and Dr. Uta Herbst conducted a study in 2010 that analyzed corporate brand personality perception in a business-to-business (B2B) market. In other words, Merz and Herbst examined corporate brand personalities from the perspective of other companies and consumers as opposed to just consumers. Business experts were surveyed to assess several companies, each within a specific industry, resulting in a compilation of corporate brand personality

traits by industry. This set of personality traits was then reduced and tested in an analysis for a final set of measureable traits in a corporate setting (Herbst & Merz, 2011). The results showed that corporate brand personality is composed of two facets; *informational* (e.g., well-known, professional, and experienced) and *risk reducing* (e.g., trustworthy, serious). Furthermore, Herbst and Merz concluded that the most effective corporate brand personality exhibited personality traits of *diligence, leadership, and intellect*. An additional factor that influences the effectiveness of a corporate brand personality is popularity (i.e. how well the company is known). The results of Herbst and Merz's study demonstrate that of all possible personality traits, trustworthiness is the most essential for a successful corporate brand personality. In addition to trust, it is equally important for a company to project a corporate brand personality that signifies high-performance, credibility, and competence.

Marketing communications experts Helen Stuart & Gayle Kerr conducted a qualitative study to highlight the importance of integrating corporate brand personality into marketing communications efforts (i.e. advertising, selling, etc.). Specifically, this study looked to analyze the importance of congruity between a corporate brand personality and its product brand personality. The findings of this study indicate that a "consistent corporate culture" across an organization congruently connects the product personality with the corporate personality. Secondly, corporate identity should be the source from which all marketing efforts stem. A public relations consultant claims, "If you have a clear knowledge as an organization of what and who you are...then logically your consistency of messages are going to be easier to support and flow throughout the organization." Stuart and Kerr's findings demonstrate the importance of congruity between a corporate brand personality and brand personality. Ultimately, corporate

brand personality functions as a broad message, or umbrella, which all other communications, such as brand personality, should build upon (Stuart & Kerr, 1999).

In 1999, marketing researchers John Balmer and Guillaume Soenen conducted a research study that assessed the variables that contribute to a corporate identity and ultimately, a corporate brand personality. The variables being measured were company culture, values, visions, and business strategy. Balmer and Soenen interviewed multiple corporate identity experts who performed content analyses on case studies, internal corporate documents, and a review of commercial reports to reveal methods in which a corporate brand identity is developed. The results of this study show that corporate cultures, values, and beliefs need to be developed around a vision articulated by the executives of a company. In other words, the founders or executives of a company establish a corporate vision which serves as the core of its personality. A vision provides guidance and sets future goals for the company. Balmer and Soenen's study suggests that it is important for corporate brand personalities to congruently reflect core visions set by executives to demonstrate authenticity (Balmer & Soenen, 1999).

#### **Limitations of Corporate Brand Personality Studies:**

Herbst & Merz' study showed that participants formulated their view of a corporation's brand personality based on their own individual employment positions. For instance, the study results show that participants employed in *production* perceived corporate brand personalities as more "sensational" than participants in *management*. Additionally, participants working in management perceived corporate brand personalities as more "credible" than participants working in production. Although participants of both positions perceived the "performance" dimension of a corporate

brand personality very similarly, the reasoning behind their perceptions is not fully understood (Herbst & Merz, 2011).

Corporate brand personality perceptions are formed by several broad external factors whereas product brand personality perceptions are more specific. Consumer perception of a corporate brand personality can be directly and indirectly influenced by events, journalism, advertisements, office building architecture and location, and other marketing efforts (Raffelt, Schmitt, & Meyer 2013; Park, 1986). Additionally, industry identity, product performance, leadership style, and executive relationships are additional factors that influence corporate brand personality perceptions (Balmer & Soenen, 1999). Further research is needed to understand the weight attributed to each factor so that a more thorough assessment of corporate brand personality can be made. On the other hand product-related attributes, product category associations, brand name, symbol or logo, advertising style, and price are more influential towards consumer perceptions of a brand personality.

It is also speculated that the development of “exceptional leaders” is a quality that attributes to a corporate brand personality and needs to be studied further. The more likely a company is to produce an excellent pipeline of leaders, generation after generation, the more likely that traits of *prestige*, *credibility*, *professionalism*, and *leadership* will be exhibited through its corporate brand personality. For example, a case study conducted by leadership development consultants Dave Ulrich and Norm Smallwood (2007) showed that the companies PepsiCo, Goldman Sachs, Disney, and Boeing all have a reputation of going beyond “standard-issue” leadership training. Company history and a reputation for consistently producing effective corporate leaders alters an individual’s perception of a company’s brand personality. Although a

reputation for producing leaders is more applicable to older and more established companies, it is undoubtedly a major contributor to the corporate brand reputation. However, this factor is difficult to measure and account for since not all companies aim to garner a reputation for producing exceptional leaders. Furthermore, individual assessment of “exceptional” leaders requires the consideration of their work history, academic background, etc. (Ulrich & Smallwood, 2007).

### **Discussion:**

In order to investigate how leadership traits may be linked to positive brand personalities, we begin by examining what psychologists call major human traits. Psychologist Warren Norman states that there are five core personality dimensions: extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience. By using the five core personality traits to analyze the personalities of both brands and leaders, we can determine whether common traits of leaders can also be found in brands. We will also see that the degree to which brands possess these traits matters; too much or too little of a trait influences whether or not a brand will become a leader in its category.

## The Big Five Personality Traits

### Introduction:

Several options existed for approaching an analysis of personality. These options include Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Raymond Cattell's 16 personality factors, Hans Eysenck's three-factor theory, or The big five personality dimensions, also known as "the five-factor theory" (FFT). The five-factor approach was chosen because it is a well-established theory, not overly complex, uses consistent terminology, and can be applied to brand personality. The theory suggests that people have essentially five major personality traits that can be measured. The big five traits of personality are; (1) *extraversion*; (2) *agreeableness*; (3) *conscientiousness*; (4) *neuroticism*; and (5) *openness to experience*. These traits are on a continuum and vary within different individuals. Some people will possess higher levels of certain traits and others will have lower levels. Psychologists Lewis Goldberg, Naomi Takemoto-Chock, Andrew Comrey, and John Digman verified the big five personality dimensions as a universal taxonomy of personality traits capable of representing diverse personality descriptions in a common framework (Goldberg, 1990). In other words, the big five provides a more broad approach to analyzing personality while other personality theories are too narrowly defined for general application (Rothman & Coetzer, 2003). The big five thus provided a starting point for a basic analysis of personality that could later lead to more specific research (Pervin & John, 1999).

## **History of the Big Five Personality Dimensions:**

The big five began development in 1932 when psychologist William McDougall suggested that personality might be advantageously analyzed through five distinguishable but separate factors. Shortly after McDougall's publication, German psychologists Klages (1926) and Baumgarten (1933) began analyzing language to more effectively describe personality. The results of their research lead to psychologist Raymond Cattell's system of 16 primary factors and 8 second-order factors to describe personality in 1943. In order to make Cattell's theory less complex, psychologist Donald Fiske (1949) proposed that personality analysis could be condensed down to five factors. Ernest Tupes, and Raymond Christal tested Fiske's five-factor theory in 1961 and proposed five trait categories of surgency, agreeableness, dependability, emotional stability, and culture. Psychologist Warren Norman further analyzed Tupes & Christal's five factors in 1963 and confirmed the categories but changed dependability to conscientiousness (Digman, 1990). It was not until 1980 that researchers Lewis Goldberg, Naomi Takemoto-Chock, Andrew Comrey, and John Digman tested the big five theory and verified its validity amongst the personality research community (Goldberg, 1990). The big five traits later evolved into extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience.

## **Extraversion:**

The category of extraversion analyzes how people engage with the external world. Individuals who score higher in this category tend to be more extraverted versus introverted. For example, a more extroverted individual is talkative, assertive, outspoken, and enthusiastic while a more introverted individual is quiet, shy, reserved,

withdrawn, and silent. This does not mean that introverted people are socially awkward or depressed; it means that they require less stimulation and are more independent of social situations. Within the big five, the extraversion dimension assesses someone's activity level (active, energetic), dominance, sociability (outgoing, talkative), expressiveness (outspoken, boastful), and positive emotionality (Pervin & John, 1999).

**Agreeableness:**

Agreeableness relates to someone's general and emotional concern with social harmony. An individual who scores high on agreeableness is altruistic and shows signs of sympathy towards, and willingness to help others. Agreeable individuals are typically kind, appreciative, affectionate, generous, trusting, praising, and sensitive (Pervin & John, 1999). In contrast, someone who scores low in this category is likely to be more egocentric, skeptical of others' intentions, and more competitive than cooperative (Rothman & Coetzer, 2003). Disagreeable individuals are usually faultfinding, unfriendly, quarrelsome, cruel, and thankless (Pervin & John, 1999).

**Conscientiousness:**

Conscientiousness refers to someone's ability for self-control and the success of planning, organizing, and executing tasks (Rothman & Coetzer, 2003). An individual who scores high with conscientiousness displays signs of purpose, determination, and responsibility. Conscientious individuals are usually organized, thorough, efficient, responsible, dependable, and precise (Pervin & John, 1999). Occasionally, highly conscientious individuals can overcompensate with their desire to achieve and thus



develop fastidiousness, compulsive neatness, or workaholic behavior (Rothman & Coetzer, 2003). On the other hand, individuals that score low on conscientiousness tend to be unorganized and less motivated. Low conscientious people are often careless, disorderly, frivolous, irresponsible, and forgetful (Pervin & John, 1999).

### **Neuroticism:**

Neuroticism measures someone's tendency to experience negative emotions such as fear, sadness, embarrassment, anger, guilt, or depression. The higher an individual's score in the neuroticism dimension, the more likely they are to experience the aforementioned emotions. In some cases, people with very high scores are likely to have psychiatric problems, irrational ideas, and cope poorly with stress (Rothman & Coetzer, 2003). Neurotic individuals are typically tense, anxious, nervous, moody, worrisome, fearful, self-pitying, and temperamental. On the other hand, low scorers exhibit emotional stability and project calmness. Individuals who score low in the neuroticism dimension show stability, emotionlessness, and contentedness (Pervin & John, 1999). Note that a certain degree of neuroticism is healthy and can be beneficial. For example, becoming worried and anxious about not completing a task can result in planning and eventually completion of the task.

### **Openness to Experience:**

Lastly, openness to experience relates to imagination, aesthetic sensitivity, curiosity, and independence of judgment (i.e. independent thinking) (Rothman & Coetzer, 2003). Individuals that score low on openness tend to be more conventional in behavior and prefer routines and things that are familiar. Common personality traits

exhibited by less open people are commonplace, simplistic, and shallow thinking or approaches to the world. People who score high on openness often question ideas, explore various theories, and live richer lives due to their natural curiosity. Individuals who score high on openness to experience are imaginative, original, insightful, artistic, clever, inventive, wise, and sophisticated (Pervin & John, 1999).

**Discussion:**

Going forward, we can use the big five personality dimensions to analyze people and brand personalities within the same universal framework. To show the connection between powerful corporate branding and leadership behavior, we need to understand the effects of leadership in addition to common personality traits found in leaders using the big five.

## **Leadership: Literature Review**

### **Introduction:**

Leadership is defined as a social process that ultimately unites and empowers fellow members of an institution towards the accomplishment of a goal. Leadership can stem from an individual, as well as multiple persons within a team. Leadership is not to be confused with management, or any other position with fixed power, as they are completely different forms of authority. For example, a newly appointed Army captain possesses authority, therefore troops are required to follow orders, but this does not indicate leadership. Leadership is defined by qualities possessed by an individual such as natural persuasion and influence whereas management is structural, involving authority and control (Sitkin & Lind, 2011).

The big five personality traits have been applied to several behavioral psychology studies that examine leadership personalities. The results of these studies concluded that within the big five personality traits, the most prominent trait of a leader is extraversion. More specifically, a leader has excellent social skills that help manage relationships and build networks through common ground and rapport (Goleman, 2000). A high level of extraversion is important for leaders so that they can foster trust, effectively resolve conflict, and encourage team commitment through direction (Lencioni, 1998).

Although the personalities of leaders vary in different situations, something that effective leaders share is called “emotional intelligence.” Emotional intelligence is the ability to be aware of, control, and express one’s emotions and to handle interpersonal relationships judiciously and empathically (Salovey & Mayer, 1995). Furthermore,

internationally renowned author and psychologist, Daniel Goleman, states that emotional intelligence is comprised of self-awareness (recognizing one's moods and emotions), self-regulation (controlling impulses through judgement), and empathy (understanding the emotions of others). Regarding the big five personality traits, emotional intelligence is a strong indicator of agreeableness and a balanced level of neuroticism.

Additionally, a leader acts ethically and responsibly serving as steward of the company or organization. Effective leaders are capable of protecting their people and promoting overall improvement instead of blame. Another hallmark of effective leaders is their ability to motivate and inspire followers and encourage excellence and innovation (Sitkin & Lind, 2011). Overall, leaders are models that individuals can emotionally connect with and follow to achieve specific objectives. In a business setting, leadership is more organic when flowing from the top down, but it is possible to lead without the use of an authoritative position. Successful notable companies have appointed individuals with leadership ability across all levels, both vertically and horizontally within a hierarchical construct. Leaders are responsible for encouraging innovation, performance, and responsible practices (Sitkin & Lind, 2011). Outside of a business setting, leadership can be applied to almost any situation involving a team working towards an achievement. A basketball coach, for example, can lead his team towards the common goal of victory, and also lead them through losses, training, and personal development.

### **Leadership Trait Studies:**

Professors of management and psychology Timothy Judge, Remus Ilies, Joyce Bono, and Gerhardt (2002) conducted a study that applied the big five personality traits to the analysis of leaders. This study performed a meta-analysis<sup>1</sup>, comparing seventy-eight academic articles, studies, and doctoral dissertations on leadership psychology and personality to pinpoint common leadership traits. This research was conducted with the same aforementioned definition of leadership therefore any articles or studies that classified leadership by salary level, career success, or persons most liked by peers, were excluded. The results showed that *extraversion* was the most statistically reliable and important personality trait of a leader. Conscientiousness and openness to experience were also closely associated with effective leadership followed by well-managed neuroticism and agreeableness (Judge, Bono, Ilies, Gerhardt, 2002). Note that a leader with too much neuroticism is likely to be self-absorbed and anxiety-ridden, while one with too little neuroticism may be too laid back to carry out tasks and would make for a poor leader. Clearly a proper balance of this trait is important. Additionally, a leader that scores high on agreeableness would have a difficult time making decisions that others might object to, while one with a low score would act irresponsibly without considering the feelings of others. Although the traits of neuroticism and agreeableness were statistically found to be the least relevant to leadership, a balance of both traits is essential for a leader to be effective. Specific qualities of leaders, within the dimensions of extraversion and conscientiousness, are *sociable*, *dominant*, *achievement-oriented*, and *dependable* (Judge et. al., 2002). Extraversion is considered to be the strongest personality trait of a leader because followers expect leaders to be *out-going*, *aggressive*,

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<sup>1</sup> A statistical approach for combining and comparing results from different studies to identify common results, relationships, or inconsistencies.

and occasionally *forceful* (Lord, Foti, & De Vader, 1984). However, individuals showing high levels of openness to experience may be perceived as better leaders because of their expressive nature, positive emotionality, and esoteric thinking which, when combined with extraversion, is equivalent to visionary leaders (Judge et al., 2002).

More recently, leadership has been studied by analyzing the relationship between leadership personalities and various situations, also known as the Fiedler Contingency Model (Sethuraman & Suresh, 2014). Business psychologists Fred Fiedler and Joe Garcia created the Contingency model in 1987 to measure leaders' personalities and their effectiveness in a specific situational environment. Specifically, the types of situational dimensions measured are a leader's ability to: (1) develop loyalty, dependability, and support from subordinates; (2) ensure task completion of subordinates; and (3) display authority over subordinates (Sethuraman & Suresh, 2014). Fiedler's contingency model is important to consider because it analyzes the personality of a leader and how they interact in a situation opposed to analyzing a leader solely by their personality traits.

A study conducted in 2014 by management professors Kavitha Sethuraman and Jayshree Suresh, used Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) personality tests to assess 300 leaders and their underlying personality traits, and their situational performance using Fiedler's contingency model. The primary personality trait categories the MBTI test looked to evaluate were extroversion/introversion, sensing/intuitive, thinking/feeling, and judging/perceiving. The results concluded that the most effective situational leadership style is "S1." An S1 leadership style projects an extroverted personality emphasizing *directness*, whereas S2 is *coaching*, S3 is *supportive*, and S4 is *delegating*. Leaders that demonstrated S3 and S4 type leadership came across as

ineffective because they lacked focus and direction when executing tasks (Sethuraman & Suresh, 2014). In conclusion, Sethuraman and Suresh determined that the personality traits most commonly associated with a leader are *directness*, *extraversion*, and *task-oriented*. Although these traits were derived using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, they are related to the big five because they strongly suggest extraversion (directness and extraversion) and conscientiousness (task-oriented).

### **Limitations of Leadership Studies:**

For the purpose of this literature review, many of the skills and qualities that separate leaders from non-leaders such as motives, cognitive abilities, and social and problem-solving skills, were not incorporated so that the focus can remain on personality traits. The trait approach to leadership (i.e. the big five) focuses on personal attributes, characteristics, competencies, and values of individual leaders. Although there are several alternative methods used to analyze leadership, trait and contingency theory were the most relevant to examining a leader's personality. Further research is needed to fully understand how a leader is developed (i.e. long-term goals, personal background, etc.) for a more thorough analysis of their personality.

## Going Forward

Using people to personify a brand is a powerful method. Brand owners or executives, celebrity endorsers, product or service users, and employees all contribute to the way a brand is perceived. Therefore, it is important to analyze their personalities and the brands they represent. A person associated with a brand provides a personality that consumers can easily analyze as opposed to just a slogan or company logo. For example, the slogan of the athletic apparel company Nike reads, "Just Do It," but the brand also uses famous athletes to endorse its products. From the perspective of a consumer, it is much easier to form a perception of Nike's brand personality by analyzing the personality of the endorser rather than its slogan. Because the big five personality dimensions are universally acknowledged, we can analyze: (1) the personality traits of brand endorsers; and (2) the personality of the brand they are endorsing. Furthermore, we can assess how companies construct brand personalities by implementing these traits.

I hypothesize that leadership personality traits help strengthen a brand's personality. If individuals are drawn and adhere to the influence of a leader, then the personality traits of a leader should replicate the same effect when applied to a brand. From a marketing aspect, a brand that positions itself as a leader is more likely to project a personality that offers guidance and direction through inspiration (Fournier, 2004). Therefore, successful brand personalities likely exhibit traces of leadership characteristics to attract and influence consumers.

All brands convey personality traits, but there is no universal combination of traits that guarantees success. There are several variables within a marketplace that need to be accounted for. For instance, some brands lie in separate industries, appeal to



distinct individuals, have a more established market presence, etc. For example, measuring the success of luxury fashion company Louis Vuitton's brand personality against an automotive brand like Toyota is difficult. Specifically, since one is a luxury goods brand appealing to a more high-class audience and the other is an automotive company offering practically priced vehicles, it is reasonable to speculate that Louis Vuitton relies much more heavily on its brand personality than Toyota. Alternatively, when comparing retail stores Wal-Mart and Target, it is easier to make an assessment because they are both in the same industry, focus on the same audience, and have a similar business model. Specifically, they are both a one-stop-shop offering products to price conscious consumers, although Wal-Mart arguably relies less on its brand personality and more on competitive pricing to attract consumers, whereas Target is the reverse.

The industry in which a brand exists should be considered going forward because even though a brand's personality essentially possesses all of the big five personality traits to a certain degree, some traits are more important than others to ensure a company's success in a specific industry. For example, agreeableness is more important in the healthcare industry because consumers seek trust, safety, and reassurance when purchasing products or services. Also, openness to experience is more important in the technology industry because the industry demands creativity to develop innovative solutions. Lastly, extraversion and conscientiousness are more important in the fashion industry because it is an outlet of self-expression where individuals identify with well-established brands. By analyzing successful brands with the big five personality dimensions, a connection between brand personality and leadership traits can be made.

## Case Studies Introduction

The purpose of these case studies is to demonstrate how the personality of brand ambassadors impact a brand's reputation and overall image and become internalized within the brand's personality. A company can effectively personify its brand through the use of everyday people, celebrity endorsers, or corporate executives. For example, Martha Stewart, a celebrity TV show host, was the actual personality behind her own home décor brand, Martha Stewart Living; any public actions or comments she made impacted the brand's overall personality. After her conviction for insider trading in 2002, her brand personality shifted to untrustworthy and fraudulent, resulting in decreased company value from \$19.23 a share to \$5.26 over a four-month period (Fournier, 2004). Similarly, professional cyclist Lance Armstrong, was the primary persona behind the nonprofit cancer support brand The Livestrong Foundation. After news of his illegal doping practices arose, Nike, a partner and annual contributor of \$7.5 million to The Livestrong Foundation, cancelled its partnership in attempt to save its own associated brand reputation (Lapowsky, 2014). If the personality of an individual representing a brand can affect a company's success, then we can speculate that when individuals with admirable personality traits are linked to a brand, they improve its image.

The people working for a brand are its main ambassadors, and the higher up in the company hierarchy, the more a person is seen as a representative of the brand (Haig, 2011). Take for instance the comparison of a brand to the military, where soldiers are equivalent to employees, captains as managers, and generals as company executives. Soldiers, captains, and generals can all effect the reputation of an army, but generals are more representative and therefore impact its reputation much more. For

example, Jack Welch, former CEO of the company General Electric, is praised for his exceptional leadership ability and is given credit for increasing the company value by over 4000% during his tenure (Leung, 2005). Welch's success at GE that made him a well-respected personality, and from that point on, he was able to project his personality onto the GE brand. Although there were several people, employees, and variables involved in the company's success, the personality of Jack Welch impacted the GE brand much more significantly due to his position in the company hierarchy. The following case studies demonstrate how executives and celebrity endorsers transfer leadership traits into a brand's personality. These case studies will also provide supporting and contrasting examples to further solidify this premise.

## **Case Study: Johnson & Johnson (Tylenol)**

The following case is an example of how the leadership traits of a company CEO and other executives add to the personality of a brand, specifically, Johnson & Johnson (J&J). During a nationwide company crisis in 1982, J&J's executives were put into the public spotlight. Their responding actions ultimately improved the brand's personality through demonstrated leadership and by remaining true to the company's values. If a group of executives can morally and ethically lead a group out of a crisis situation, then they are likely to project leadership traits that inspire others to support and trust the brand.

### **Company Background:**

J&J is an American company founded in 1886 by Robert, James, and Edward Johnson that specializes in medical devices, pharmaceutical, and consumer packaged goods. The company owns several recognizable brands such as Visine, Acuvue, Splenda, Lactaid, Sudafed, Benadryl, Listerine, Band-Aid, Neutrogena, Rogaine, and Lubriderm. In 1982, the company was worth \$5.4 billion and was ranked one of the 100 best places to work with offices in over 50 countries. The public thought the company was consumer-friendly and responsible; employees respected it. The specific brand "Tylenol," a subsidiary of J&J, was originally promoted through doctors and pharmacists as a pain reliever to overcome the side effects of aspirin. Tylenol was one of the major players in the analgesic<sup>1</sup> market and owned about 35% of all market sales, which contributed to 15-20% of J&J's profits (Moore, 2012).

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<sup>1</sup> Drug developed for pain relief

### **Demonstrated Leadership:**

On September 30, 1982, a reporter called J&J to inform them that 7 people had died from tampered Tylenol consumption. The source of the tampering was untraceable and Tylenol products were still on the shelves in American stores. The J&J executives learned that cyanide had been placed in several bottles but remained unsure of the cause, which ultimately led to the executive decision of a nationwide recall. James Burke, CEO of J&J, quickly launched an intensive investigation in cooperation with the FBI and Food and Drug Administration. Additionally, J&J installed 33 extra telephones specifically dedicated to communicating information to the press and updating status messages on its main phone lines. Furthermore, full-page advertisements were taken out in major newspapers offering to exchange Tylenol capsules for Tylenol tablets (a non-contaminated J&J pain reliever) (Fearn-Banks, 2007).

Of the big five personality traits displayed in this crisis, executives of J&J primarily demonstrated *agreeableness*. Specifically, J&J was very sensitive to the situation and showed empathy to the public by offering reimbursement for purchases and spending over \$100 million to recall potentially tainted Tylenol products. There was also display of *conscientiousness* during the crisis when the J&J executives tried to deal with the matter as efficiently and carefully as possible. Their competent communication with the media and swift problem solving showed the company's high level of professionalism and organization versus spontaneity and negligence. The level of *extraversion* displayed by the company executives was higher than usual because the executives faced the problem openly and invited the press in. More specifically, the executives participated in numerous press conferences, news shows, and other forms of media, and showed that they were outgoing, passionate, and confident in their

company's efforts instead of remaining quiet and passive. Furthermore, J&J executives were careful not to demonstrate too much *neuroticism*. Neuroticism in moderation is a useful trait. If one were too carefree and never worried about anything, one would not be as motivated to carry out tasks. However, too much neuroticism signals anxiety and worry. The last thing executives wanted was for people to worry about the safety of Tylenol.

During the crisis, an opinionated survey conducted on Tylenol showed that 61% of consumers said they were not likely to buy Tylenol products in the future (Moore, 2012). Also, Tylenol's market share in the analgesic market dropped from 37% to 7% during the first two months following the poisonings. However, determined to win back consumer trust, J&J created the first tamper-proof, triple-sealed safety containers for its medical products and revolutionized the healthcare industry standard. Through the leadership of James Burke and other J&J executives, the Tylenol market share climbed back to 30% within a year (Rehak, 2002). The quick decisions made by the J&J executives is rather remarkable because they had a crisis communications plan<sup>2</sup>, which was rare for any company during this time period. This financial result doesn't thoroughly deem the brand personality equivalent to a leader, but rather it signifies the impact leadership actions can have on a brand's sales and more importantly, its image.

### **How Leadership Traits Tie into the Brand Personality:**

James Burke gathered a group of executives to plan a recovery strategy for Tylenol. This meant investing thousands of dollars for consumer attitude surveys, research and development, and advertisements. The greatest challenge was

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<sup>2</sup> A public relations plan designed to protect and defend a company or organization's reputation when facing public inquiry.

overcoming the associated fear that consumers attached to J&J and more specifically Tylenol. Burke claims that since most consumers began using Tylenol during their stays in the hospital and doctor recommendations, the brand became such a big franchise due to the trust of consumers (Moore, 2012). Although much of the trust was lost in the Tylenol poisonings, the genuine empathy and truth telling from J&J's executives helped maintain enough trust to ultimately save the brand.

The actions of the company leaders ultimately shaped the public perception of J&J's brand image and personality. It is interesting to note that a year before his placement as CEO, President James Burke decided to hold an executive meeting to revisit the company credo, the corporate value statement that would unknowingly help guide J&J employees through the Tylenol crisis. The credo states J&J's responsibility to always provide consumers with quality products and to provide a sense of security, safety, competency, community, and protection. The purpose of holding the credo challenge was to thoroughly assess what the company stood for and make any necessary changes to ensure employee commitment. Line after line of the company credo was reviewed and none of the lines were changed. The company executives left that meeting more committed to the credo than ever before, signifying a true act of leadership from James Burke. Michael Santoro, Professor of Management and Global Business at Rutgers Business School claims, "It was the credo that turned the Tylenol crisis into J&J's finest hour and cemented its reputation as the gold standard in corporate ethics" (Santoro, 2013). If corporate executive are able to create and maintain the corporate values that strengthen the corporate brand, then they undoubtedly impact the way a company, and its brands, are perceived.

The leadership actions that define J&J's success in response to the crisis were: (1) the company was open to the media; (2) It was willing to recall the product no matter what that meant to the company; and (3) It appealed to the American sense of fair play and asked for the public's trust (Fearn-Banks, 2007). These priorities set by company executives show that J&J was truthful and cooperative with the media, moral and altruistic towards its customers, and sympathetic to the victims. Since the executive actions of J&J remained congruent with their corporate values instilled in the company credo throughout the crisis, the executives were able to lead J&J back to its natural state by demonstrating agreeableness.

In contrast to J&J, Perrier, a bottled-water company, underwent a similar situation when its water supply had been contaminated with benzene, a chemical that can cause vomiting, convulsions, and rapid heartbeats. Perrier responded by only recalling a small portion of water bottles in North America, claiming that it was an isolated incident. Once contaminated bottles were discovered in Europe weeks later, Perrier had to announce a worldwide recall, clearly demonstrating its lack of investigation and ethicality (or agreeableness). Perrier was then harshly criticized by the media who claimed that they had little integrity and had disregarded public safety. Perrier sales fell dramatically, and since then, the company has yet to regain its market share throughout the world (Meyers, 1990). When compared to a company that was not transparent with the media and ethical with its decisions, J&J stands out as a leadership brand by projecting high levels of the trait agreeableness.

This process of rebuilding a brand during a crisis can be directly compared to leaders navigating their team through a crisis as well. Brands have individual values, physical features, character, and personality just like a person. The way consumers



perceive that brand is reflective of the type of relationship that they have with that brand. People want to follow authentic individuals displaying concern for ethical interests, not just adherence to an organizational title. The Tylenol crisis was an opportunity for J&J's brand personality to be displayed at a genuine and human level. The outcome of the crisis increased the strength of the relationship J&J had with its consumers.

### **Brand Personality Analysis:**

The primary trait of Tylenol's brand personality is *agreeableness*. Personality psychologists explain that agreeableness entails specific personality traits such as trustworthiness, amiability, and altruism (Goldberg, 1990). Since J&J is mostly involved in the healthcare industry, its brand personality focused on projecting agreeableness by demonstrating trust, honesty, and altruism. Agreeableness is further personified by J&J's company credo, in which the opening line states, "We believe our first responsibility is to the doctors, nurses and patients, mothers and fathers and all others who use our products and services" (Fearn-Banks, 2007). As the core of the company's foundation, this credo signifies that J&J wants to express its genuine pledge to help customers improve aspects of their lives, almost as if they were guardians.

Furthermore, to personify its brand, J&J relied on using "everyday" people and celebrity endorsers in its advertisements (i.e. comedian Ray Romano, Olympic gymnast Cathy Rigby, and TV personality Elisabeth Hasslebeck) for years. Advertisements of the company have remained consistent throughout the past few decades but the core of J&J's brand is its care for its customer's well-being. For example, an advertisement produced in 1947 by artist Gladys Rockmore portrays a young girl tending to her

brother's injuries with a J&J first aid kit while the underlying text reads, "Mommy always says you're safe when you use J&J." Another advertisement campaign launched in 2012 titled "You're doing OK, Mom!" shows several video clips of mothers taking care of their newborn babies with J&J products. The primary message of this advertisement states that it is a profound change to have a child and become a parent, but J&J is there for support. Both advertisements demonstrate agreeableness within J&J's brand personality by emphasizing care and responsibility.

Leading up to the re-launch of Tylenol products, J&J aired a 60 second commercial for two months stating that Tylenol would be returning to stores soon. This commercial was estimated to reach up to 85% of American households (Fearn-Banks, 2007). A commercial for children's Tylenol in 1983, shows a mother tucking her feverish child into bed talking saying, "I never knew what to give Billy during a fever. Then I found out what more pediatricians give their own kids. Children's Tylenol." The camera then focuses on the new Tylenol package, which heavily emphasizes the words "New Safety Sealed" signifying its commitment to keep customers safe. Alan Hilburg, Brand Manager for Tylenol in 1982, states that the product packaging was a metaphor for trust. It was a medium that potential consumers could identify and examine while also reinforcing J&J's dedication to avoid future contaminations. These advertisements revolved around the idea that, although the product was still legitimately effective, the primary issue at stake was safety. Therefore, the underlying message within these advertisements was the promise that consumers would be protected at all costs. The success of the advertisements was due to J&J's genuine demonstrations of agreeableness, more specifically trust, during the Tylenol crisis. Since these advertisements congruently projected a display of agreeableness and trust with J&J's

credo, a rehabilitated, genuine and trustworthy image began to strengthen within J&J's brands. This marketing campaign reassured the public of J&J's sincere understanding and empathy, and ultimately rehabilitated the damaged J&J brand personality.

**Recap:**

J&J has always remained a respectable and reputable company over the years, and its actions taken during the crisis strengthened its brand image. The perception of the company's ethical commitment to consumer's well-being were tested in the public spotlight during the crisis, and, it is clear that J&J succeeded. The leadership of the executives directly influenced the public's perception of J&J's corporate reputation, which in turn influenced its brand's personality, in this case Tylenol. After news of the crisis arose, Tylenol's market share fell drastically, but because of publically demonstrated leadership throughout the crisis, consumers returned Tylenol to its original market share value within a year. Consumers had the option to choose alternate pain reliever brands, but with the powerful brand personality that J&J maintained, consumers chose Tylenol. The fact that consumers chose Tylenol over other identical products highlights the importance of brand personality regarding consumer preference and product differentiation. Since all the pain-reliever products in 1982 were indistinguishable from one another, brand personality was clearly a contributing factor when consumers made purchasing decisions. The Tylenol case is a prime example of how leadership traits transferred into a brand's personality, and ultimately influenced consumer preference. The swift actions and principles demonstrated by J&J executives are now a standard in the field of crisis communications and ultimately part of J&J's brand image and personality.

## **Case Study: Apple**

The following case is an example demonstrating how the leadership qualities of a company founder and CEO ultimately contribute to the brand personality, specifically Steve Jobs with Apple. As an individual who is credited for, or frequently associated with, the development of several successful companies, technological advancements, and product trends throughout his career, Jobs undoubtedly possesses several examinable leadership traits. Ever since 2006, Apple only occasionally used celebrity endorsers or everyday people in their marketing efforts. Advertisements containing celebrities and everyday actors were used prior to 2006 to humanize the brand, but the trending focus of its advertisements is on the products themselves. Therefore, with fewer recent personas to anthropomorphize the Apple brand, the most influential source for its personality eventually became Steve Jobs. In addition to being an iconic business figure, Jobs was also the center of attention for numerous product launches, press articles, and news appearances, increasing his overall influence on Apple's brand personality. Steve Jobs possessed leadership traits and was an influential figure for Apple's brand. Therefore, his leadership qualities are likely reflected in Apple's brand personality.

### **Company Background:**

Apple is an American company founded in 1976 by Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak. The company specializes in consumer electronics, personal computers, computer software, and distribution of media content ("Forbes: Apple Profile," n.d.). Apple's highly recognized products include the Mac, iPhone, iPad, iPod, iTunes, Safari web browser, and Apple TV. In November 2014, CNN reported Apple to be worth \$700

billion in addition to being ranked as the most valuable company in the world by Forbes (Soloman, 2014). Apple is perceived as an innovative, tech-savvy, creative and professional company dedicated to the spread of knowledge (Pinson & Brosdahl, 2013). Apple's brand name and image is so recognizable, powerful, and respected that the company has recently tied the name into its 2014-2015 products such as Apple Pay and Apple Watch demonstrating its brand equity.

### **Demonstrated Leadership:**

Although both Steve Wozniak and Steve Jobs founded Apple, Jobs eventually became its primary personality. Through multiple product unveilings, panel board discussions, and public appearances, Steve Jobs became increasingly popular and more closely associated with Apple. By examining Jobs' past experiences and using the big five personality traits as a framework for analyzing Jobs' personality, I suggest a connection between his leadership and Apple's brand personality.

Jobs' most exhibited personality trait was *openness to experience*. Individuals that score high on openness to experience exhibit signs of intellectual curiosity, complex problem solving, imagination, artistic interests, and emotional richness. In several biographies (*Steve Jobs: The Man Who Thought Different*, *Steve Jobs: Thinking Differently*, and *Steve Jobs*), Jobs was praised for his tendency to do things differently and strive for unique ideas. For example, during his tenure at animated motion picture company Pixar, Jobs had the corporate office specifically designed to encourage spontaneous interactions amongst employees to promote collaboration and innovation. The hallways, stairs, conference rooms, mailboxes, and cafés all led to, or were located, in the central atrium. John Lasseter, Chief Creative Officer at Pixar, claims, "Steve's theory

worked from day one...I've never seen a building that promoted collaboration and creativity as well as this one" (Isaacson, 2012). Jobs was willing to try different activities and approaches while seeking novelty and variety, a key aspect of his personality. His openness to experience developed and established corporate culture within the companies he led, but also played a key role in creating products. For example, on June 1, 2010, during an All Things Digital 8 Conference<sup>1</sup>, Jobs reflected back on designing the first generation iPhone and mentioned, "I had this idea about having a glass display, a multi-touch display you could type on. Six months later, [our people] came back with this amazing display." Additionally, Jobs had the vision to integrate all hardware, software, and devices into what is known as the Apple ecosystem, making tasks simpler and lives easier. The success of this concept has transformed consumer experiences and the way people interact with technology, simply because Jobs wanted to do things differently. These examples display Jobs' ability to creatively envision and materialize not only products, but also technological revolutions. His openness to experience ultimately contributed to the creation of successful products and ideas, and lives on in its brand personality.

The second most prevalent trait of Steve Jobs is *conscientiousness*. Aside from his involvement with Apple, Jobs also founded NeXT, a computer platform company, acquired and served as CEO for Pixar, a computer graphics division of Lucasfilm, and contributed to the creation of the desktop laser printer market. These milestones illustrate his strong desire to achieve. This portion of his personality also led Jobs to cultivate corporate environments that inspired his staff to be great. Walter Isaacson (2012), former CEO of CNN and American biographer claims that, "[Jobs] infused Apple

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<sup>1</sup> A prestigious conference held amongst the business and technology community.

employees with an abiding passion to create groundbreaking products and a belief that they could accomplish what seemed impossible.” When first developing the Macintosh operating system, Jobs approached head engineer Larry Kenyon and suggested he make the boot up time shorter. After several refusals and claims that the task was not possible, Jobs said, “If it would save a person’s life, could you find a way to shave 10 seconds off the boot time?” Within a few weeks, Kenyon reduced the boot time by nearly 30 seconds. Jobs’ mentality and approach demonstrated self-discipline, desire to achieve, and competence, all fundamental facets within conscientiousness.

Jobs also displayed several signs of *extraversion* during his career. Most notable were the multiple product unveilings and press conferences where he was the center of attention. His presentation style was often stimulating, confident, exciting, energetic, and optimistic, which eventually became a key component of Apple’s marketing efforts. The extraverted nature of Steve Jobs influenced the corporate perception and company products. Carmine Gallo (2010), an author focused on leadership communications, says that Jobs had an ability to turn typical, boring presentations into theatrical events that people described as an extraordinary experience. Additionally, Jobs was known for being incredibly demanding and assertive when leading his staff. It was at these times that Jobs displayed mild traits of *neuroticism*, specifically anger. When creating MobileMe, an email synchronization system, Jobs berated his workers and said, “You’ve tarnished Apple’s reputation...you should hate each other for having let each other down!” (Lehrer, 2011). However, the neurotic behavior was rooted in the best intentions for the company and ultimately generated creativity amongst its employees (Lehrer, 2011). Although these personality traits are not as visible in the brand personality, they nonetheless influenced the way individuals perceive Apple.

Leaders have specific qualities such as being creative and innovative, open to new experiences, and visionary. They also are depicted as experienced, dedicated, coherent, and responsible (Sitkin & Lind, 2011). Jobs portrayed the majority of these qualities through his guidance, product developments, and executive decisions. The innovative and imaginative culture that Jobs cultivated for Apple still exists in the company today. Walter Isaacson claims that Apple will be successful both creatively and technologically as long as Jobs' DNA persists at its core (Isaacson, 2012). As founder and CEO of one of the most successful brands in financial history, the personality of Steve Jobs certainly exhibited leadership traits that remain in Apple's brand personality.

### **How Leadership Traits Tie into the Brand Personality:**

If the leaders of a company represent its respective brands, then they ultimately tie into the brand personality. This is especially true when leadership is in the public spotlight because that is where perceptions are primarily formed. One of the most defining moments for Apple was during its 1997 "Think Different" campaign when Steve Jobs had just returned to Apple as CEO and the company was in a six-year sales decline. Given the low morale at the time, Jobs decided to create the campaign to inspire employees to accept the fact that they are different and that they are capable of shaping the future. The famous "Here's to the Crazy Ones" advertisement shows clips of transformational figures such as Martin Luther King Jr., Mahatma Ghandi, Muhammad Ali while actor Richard Dreyfuss reads,

Here's to the crazy ones. The misfits. The rebels. The troublemakers. The round pegs in the square holes. The ones who see things differently. They're not fond of rules. And they have no respect for the status quo. You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify or vilify them. About the only thing you can't do is ignore them. Because they change things. They push the human race forward. And while some may see them as the crazy



ones, we see genius. Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do.

This advertisement was not just a strategic marketing effort to add to Apple's brand image, but instead it encompassed and portrayed the genuine brand personality of Apple as a whole. This advertisement perfectly captures Jobs' mentality and inner personality and set the tone for company's visions and goals. Through Steve Jobs leadership, the company regained confidence and market share, and ultimately established its brand personality as different and innovative.

Similarly to Steve Jobs, another famous CEO that is the primary persona behind his brand is Mark Zuckerberg. Zuckerberg founded the company Facebook, an online social networking service in 2004, and his name has been closely associated with the brand ever since. Zuckerberg's personality has been established through numerous interviews, magazine articles, biographies, and an award-winning movie titled, "The Social Network." As one of the few individuals to ever create a multibillion-dollar company that revolutionized the way people interact with one another, Zuckerberg clearly possesses leadership traits. He has demonstrated high levels of extraversion throughout his career by being outspoken about Facebook and his personal history. He has also shown high levels of agreeableness through his active philanthropic involvement such as donating \$25 million to fight Ebola in 2014 and \$75 million to a cancer trauma center at San Francisco General Hospital in 2015 ("Mark Zuckerberg," 2015). Zuckerberg also demonstrates high levels of openness to experience and conscientiousness by contributing to the creation of social networking, acquiring and developing multiple social media applications, and investing in several trending businesses such as virtual reality ("Mark Zuckerberg," 2015). Since the company's

founding, Facebook has become one of the most recognized and valuable brands in the world with over 1.4 billion users. As the primary personality behind Facebook, Zuckerberg has ultimately contributed to the way individuals perceive the brand.

### **Brand Personality Analysis:**

The brand personality of Apple revolves around lifestyle, imagination, passion, and the empowerment of people through technology, strongly suggesting the primary personality trait of Apple is openness to experience. This personality trait is reflected in its company slogan, which reads, “Think Different,” a key component in Jobs’ personality. It is also present in product design and functionality when compared to competitors, and serves as the core of Apple’s marketing efforts. Additionally, alternate slogans used since Apple was founded reiterate its openness to experience by using words such as original, creators, beauty, design, simplicity, creative, etc. For example, “Beauty. Brains. And now more brawn,” “The ultimate all-in-one. Turbocharged,” “Redesigned. Reengineered. Re-everything,” “Engineered for the Creative Class,” “Simplicity is the Ultimate Sophistication” (Hernandez, 2013; Hattersley, 2012).

Ever since the company was founded in 1976, it has made an effort to differentiate itself from competitors and focus heavily on emotions. Originally, Apple’s brand personality was primarily known for challenging the computer industry as a whole through rebellious, nonconformist, and innovative traits particularly aimed towards people involved in the creative industries such as graphic designers. For example, Apple’s famous advertisement in 1984 incorporated elements from the widely known “1984” novel by George Orwell. The advertisement shows a woman outrunning the “thought police” and eventually throwing a sledgehammer into a giant TV screen

with big Brother's face. This depicted competitors like Microsoft, IBM, and other major computer companies as boring, unadventurous, and as villains while showing Apple as the opposite. This strategy of projecting its brand personality as a leader that can save people deprived of technology reoccurs throughout Apple's early years. This commercial established nationwide curiosity, but more importantly established Apple as different and more promising compared to its competitors. This is reflected in the company's prestige and popularity throughout the world. Apple's advertisements emphasize its personality and clearly demonstrate its identity as an innovative and elite industry leader, similar to the personality of Steve Jobs.

Other past Apple advertisements further indicate that the personalities associated with the brand primarily possess high levels of conscientiousness, more specifically, self-confidence, boastfulness, and sophistication. The majority of people used in video advertisements from 1984-2006 are aspiring business professionals shown using Apple products as well as "everyday people." For example, a 1987 advertisement shows two business executives sitting in a conference room discussing a potential deal between their respective companies. The end of the advertisement shows the deal being severed because one of the executives doesn't want to take a chance with new software, which is later revealed to be IBM software. This advertisement shows Apple's eagerness to separate itself from IBM in a superior, and confident way, similar to the way Jobs presented and differentiated Apple's newest products. Interestingly, the only use of celebrity endorsement comes from actor Justin Long in the famous "I'm a Mac, and I'm a PC" commercial series. This campaign shows Justin Long representing Apple's line of Macintosh computers and an older, unfamiliar, less-superior man representing personal computers. This is one of the few instances

where Apple used comedy and satire in its marketing efforts, but nonetheless proved effective in differentiating Apple from competitors. Apple also demonstrates *agreeableness* by showing its capability of making people's lives easier and happier through technology. Commercials display the ease of accomplishing multiple tasks, bringing creative ideas to life, and connecting with others.

Steve Jobs is heavily tied to Apple's brand personality. He was, and still is, closely associated with Apple and his personality continues to affect the way consumers perceive the brand. Several articles online and biographies all depict Jobs as a legend and a visionary of the technology industry. However, a popular biography on Steve Jobs written by Walter Isaacson portrays Jobs as very neurotic and less agreeable. As a New York Times best seller, and the top selling book on Amazon, Isaacson's biography effects the perception that individuals form on Steve Jobs. Current CEO of Apple, Tim Cook criticizes Isaacson's biography and claims, "You get the feeling that [Steve's] a greedy, selfish egomaniac. It didn't capture the person" (Farberov, 2015). Interestingly, a newly released biography written by Brent Schlender and Rick Tetzeli titled, "Becoming Steve Jobs," looks to dismantle perceptions of Jobs as egomaniacal and autocratic, and instead portray him as empathetic and collected (Campbell, 2015). For example, a portion of the description reads, "*Becoming Steve Jobs* shows us how one of the most colorful and compelling figures of our time was able to combine his unchanging, relentless passion with a more mature management style." Some of the most resonating excerpts of the biography include interviews and anecdotes from Tim Cook as well as others who were closely tied to Jobs. Tim Cook's approval of Schlender and Tetzeli's biography suggests that executives of Apple do not want Steve Jobs' personality to be viewed as neurotic since he is so closely tied to Apple's brand. The more that Jobs is

portrayed as a visionary and a desirable leader, then the more likely consumers will admire and grow attached to the Apple brand.

**Recap:**

At this point, Apple has surpassed much of its competition and has already established validation through their reputable product quality and cultivation of user communities. One of its most valuable assets is its brand recognition and prestige because it is a brand consumers trust and are familiar with. As the founder of Apple, Steve Jobs had an impact on the brand from the very beginning. His executive decisions and style of leadership affected the company goals and standards, corporate culture, and developed products. Although studies suggest that CEOs determine 49% of the company's overall reputation, it is clear that Jobs played a much more significant role since his name is so closely associated with Apple. Steve Jobs undoubtedly set the fundamental framework for the company and left traces of his own personality and legacy in the brand. His personality consisted primarily of high levels of openness to experience, followed by extraversion, and conscientiousness; all very similar to traits expressed by Apple's brand personality. These traits reflect leadership, and undoubtedly contribute to the success of Apple.

## Case Study: Nike

The following case is an example of how the personalities of celebrity endorsers contribute to a company's brand personality, specifically endorsers of the sports brand Nike. Although, the key factors in the sports apparel industry are design and quality, another element that differentiates competing companies is branding, in this case, the use of celebrity endorsements. Nike's branding tactics revolve heavily around using famous athletes to contribute to its overall brand personality by providing them with trending Nike clothing, accessories, equipment, or their own product line. Since the majority of Nike's brand personality is heavily associated with these athletes, it would be beneficial to analyze their personalities to find common traits that back Nike's success. Endorsers are a powerful marketing tool that can revamp a brand, reinforce a brand identity, and communicate a commitment to a cause, which in turn can affect a consumer's purchase intentions and brand attachment (Ambroise et al., 2014).

When choosing athlete endorsers, brands want the athletes to have high performance, a winning record, skill, style, and potential while on the field. However, it is equally as important for the athlete to have a positive personality, uniqueness, and traits of a role model or leader off the field, making for a more inspirational figure (Conway, 2015). For this reason, it is hypothesized that mutual personality traits amongst these athletes are traits commonly found in leaders. If leadership traits can be found in the athletes Nike endorses, then those traits would be associated with Nike and would build its brand identity.

### **Company Background:**

Nike is an American company founded in 1964 by Bill Bowerman and Phil Knight. It specializes in manufacturing and selling athletic footwear, apparel, equipment, and accessories. According to Forbes in 2014, Nike was worth over \$19 billion and considered the most valuable sports business brand in the world (Ozanian, 2014). Nike owns several other brands such as Converse, Cole Haan, Hurley International, and Umbro. Two major brand identities of Nike are its slogan "Just Do It" and its iconic swoosh logo. The public perceives Nike as innovative, authentic, strong, high performing, aggressive, achievement oriented, superior, and fashionable (Larson, 2011). Nike has notably had several recognizable athlete endorsers such as Michael Jordan, Bo Jackson, Carl Lewis, Tiger Woods, LeBron James, Serena Williams, and Rory Mcilroy.

### **Demonstrated Leadership:**

The person most commonly associated with Nike is former NBA basketball player Michael Jordan. With 30% of all Nike sales, cumulatively over \$1 billion, stemming from his Air Jordan brand, it is hard to argue against the fact that Jordan undoubtedly contributes to Nike's brand. Other key endorsements come from celebrity athletes such as Tiger Woods, Roger Federer, LeBron James, and Maria Sharapova. Through analysis of the celebrity endorsers using the big five personality framework, I will propose a connection between leadership traits and Nike's brand personality.

When analyzing the personality of Michael Jordan, one can see that his most dominant trait is *conscientiousness* which is demonstrated most fully throughout his career in basketball. An individual with high levels of conscientiousness exhibits

competence, ambition, and discipline. His personal background is that of an underdog story. Jordan was told that he didn't meet the athletic requirements to play basketball at a high school varsity level. However, Jordan proved himself by scoring an average of 40 points per game his sophomore year which earned him a spot on the varsity and All American team. He was then recruited by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill where he was named ACC freshman of the year and later earned a spot on the NCAA All-American first team. Through his business ventures and endorsements, Jordan was the first athlete in history to become a billionaire. His personal story is motivational and his former status as a professional athlete further projects traits of self-discipline, efficacy, and high achievement.

Michael Jordan also displayed several instances of *extroversion* during his lifetime. Aside from being in the spotlight while playing sports, Jordan was also in the 1996 movie *Space Jam*, which gave him exposure to a younger audience. Additionally, Jordan made several appearances on talk shows, interviews, and magazines, and was rated by Bloomberg as the ninth most influential person in sports. Michael Jordan undeniably garnered an abundant amount of international attention both on and off the court, increasing his extroverted personality. Jordan has a well-balanced level of neuroticism based on his composure as an athlete under pressure. He projected calmness and confidence during championship games and was known for being a clutch performer, showing no signs of anxiety. Additionally, he was aware of how to compose himself and maintain his public image off the court exemplifying emotional stability. Jordan demonstrates high levels of *openness to experience* by returning to school to complete his bachelor's degree after two years in the NBA. He was also mildly adventurous taking on multiple professional sports such as basketball, golf, and



baseball, in addition to owning a restaurant chain and a stake in the Charlotte Hornets professional NBA team. Lastly, the trait *agreeableness* is rather vague within Jordan's personality mostly because the facets of this trait are typically related to compliance and sympathy, which aren't very relevant in sports. Overall Michael Jordan's achievements and celebrity profile primarily demonstrate high levels of conscientiousness and extroversion which portray him as an inspirational figure similar to a leader, at least within the realm of sports.

Nike's branding strategy was dependent on Jordan during the 1980's because of his portrayal as a hero amongst aspiring basketball players and fans. Specifically, youth players idolized the top athletes in their respected sport because their accomplishments are motivational and create aspiration. For this reason Jordan was the perfect endorser in 1984 because he was glorified by the media and projected as a hero in advertisements. For example, one of the first Nike commercials with Jordan in 1985 titled, "Jordan Flight" shows him in Nike basketball attire running towards a basketball goal in slow motion with airplane engine sounds blasting in the background. After he finishes a dunk with his trademark split leg pose, a voice reads, "Who said a man was not meant to fly?" Another marketing campaign conducted in 1992 between Jordan and the sports drink company Gatorade displayed a tagline that read, "I want to be like Mike" on every advertisement. These marketing efforts, in combination with his basketball career, further emphasized Michael Jordan's desirable image and status making him an idealized role model for adolescent cultures (Goldman & Papson, 1998). He is an iconic figure that many individuals declare as a legend and undoubtedly a leader in the world of sports.

### **How Leadership Traits Tie into the Brand Personality:**

Other elite athletes that Nike has endorsed over the years all show high levels of conscientiousness through achievement. For example, professional tennis player Maria Sharapova became the highest paid female athlete in history after winning the Wimbledon tennis tournament at age 17 in 2004 (Badenhausen, 2013). Professional basketball player LeBron James was on the cover of Sports Illustrated magazine at age 17, won rookie of the year at age 19, and won his first NBA MVP at age 24 (Windhorst, 2014). Professional tennis player Roger Federer became one of the only three tennis players in history to reach 1,000 victories during his career. These achievements of celebrity athletes are well acknowledged by Nike consumers and sports fans. It is through these endorsements that the conscientiousness of these athletes transfer into Nike's brand personality through association. In other words, if Nike surrounds itself with highly broadcasted and high-performing athletes, then Nike's brand personality gains more conscientious traits through association. Therefore if Nike associates itself with leaders of various sports, then Nike is in turn perceived as a leader in sports apparel.

In contrast to these athletes, an example of an endorser's negative personality traits that affected Nike's brand personality is Tiger Woods. Mostly recognized for his exceptional career as a professional golfer, Woods played a major role in building Nike's golf brand equity ever since 1996. President of Nike Golf Cindy Davis claims that Woods was one of Nike's most iconic athletes and has been an integral part of Nike Golf since the beginning (Harig, 2013). Tiger Woods has demonstrated high levels of conscientiousness through his achievements and personal background much like the other athletes Nike endorses. For example, at the age of 15, he was named *Golf Digest*

Player of the Year, *Golf World* Player of the Year, and *Golfweek* National Amateur of the Year. He later went on to win several Golf tours and break multiple records such as winning three PGA championships (Wojciechowski, 2006). His establishment and public support of charities, such as The Tiger Woods Foundation, Caddy for a Cure, and Shriners Hospitals for Children showed agreeableness and extroversion, similar to a role model. His reputation in the world of sports was inspirational and his reputation outside sports was respectable and influential. However, in 2009, an infidelity scandal unveiling Woods' affairs with multiple women began to surface and ultimately affected his reputation and the brands he had endorsements with. As the scandal gained national attention, the companies Accenture, AT&T, Gatorade, Tag Heuer, and General Motors quickly ended their endorsement deals with Woods. As Wood's reputation as a clean-cut family role model became tarnished, these brands disconnected any associations with him because he no longer reflected what the brands stood for. According to a study conducted by Victor Stango at University of California Davis, the severance of these endorsements costs the companies a total of \$12 billion in lost sales (Goldiner, 2009). Stango's study exemplifies how a simple association with an endorser can heavily influence a brand's perceived personality and financial outcome. Prior to the scandal, Woods showed several leadership traits such as high conscientiousness, extroversion, and agreeableness, which aided in the financial success of several companies. Once Woods' leadership traits were replaced with overtones of deceit and betrayal, his associated brands suffered financially. Although Nike chose to keep their endorsement deal and association with Woods following his scandal, the company lost an estimated \$10.2 million and 441,000 customers in the golf sector (Edwards, 2010).

There are several other terminated celebrity endorsement deals that demonstrate the importance of having a positive, role-model-like personality to ensure financial success. British supermodel Kate Moss lost her endorsement deals from fashion companies H&M, Burberry, and Chanel after a magazine appeared showing multiple pictures of her using cocaine. Companies AT&T, Rosetta Stone, and Kelloggs dropped Olympic swimmer Michael Phelps after he was shown in a picture smoking marijuana in 2009. Also, professional basketball player Kobe Bryant was removed from endorsement contracts with food companies McDonalds and Nutella once he was charged of rape in 2004 (Stampller, 2012). Before these incidences, these celebrities were seen as leaders within their sports and positive figures that consumers aspired to identify with. Whatever leadership traits they possessed originally cultivated a fan base and a following that helped build prestigious brands such as Calvin Klein, Gucci, Adidas, Coke, Spalding, Omega, and Visa. However, once their positive and inspirational personalities were damaged through negative actions, they were all dropped as brand ambassadors.

### **Brand Personality Analysis:**

Nike's brand personality revolves around dedication to sports, an active lifestyle, and commitment to achieve suggesting the primary personality trait of conscientiousness. This personality trait is clearly represented by its celebrity athlete endorsers as well as its company slogan which reads, "Just Do It." Conscientiousness is also present in Nike sponsored events such as marathons, street league skateboarding, soccer academy training programs, and fitness tours. Nike's marketing efforts focus on identifying with a demographic that values a healthy, athletic lifestyle as well as fashion.

Through sponsored events and celebrity endorsements, Nike has successfully created a culture that desires high quality and aesthetically pleasing athletic products.

One of the first advertisements that Nike created in 1986 shows an 80 year old man named Walt Stack running across the San Francisco golden gate bridge saying, "I run 17 miles every morning. People ask how I keep my teeth from chattering in the winter. I tell them I leave them in my locker." This advertisement sparked the famous tagline "Just Do It" and set the foundational tone for its brand personality (Taube, 2013). In 1988, Michael Jordan starred in a commercial where an energetic fan continuously questions him asking how he's so good and Jordan never answers. The fan comes to the conclusion that it has to be the shoes that make him so great and he holds up all the new Air Jordans that Nike planned to release. This advertisement allowed Nike to associate and attribute Michael Jordan's success and talent to its products thereby signifying its products as major players in the athletic apparel industry.

Another advertisement in 1995 that marked a major milestone in Nike's brand history is a commercial titled "If you let me Play" which shows several infant girls emphasizing their urge to participate in sports. The dialogue consists of emotional excerpts such as, "If you let me play sports, I would like myself more. I would have more self-confidence. I would suffer less from depression. I would be 60% less likely to get breast cancer..." The power behind this advertisement adds to the empathy and respect within Nike's agreeableness. The commercial gained nationwide attention and approval and was even played by talk show host Oprah during her own show. These advertisements place heavy emphasis on everyday individuals and celebrities, all of which significantly add to Nike's brand personality.

**Recap:**

Within the dimensions of conscientiousness, extroversion, and agreeableness, Nike's brand personality shows leadership qualities of innovative, authentic, strong, high performing, aggressive, achievement-oriented, and superior. Nike has done an excellent job making sure its celebrity athlete endorsers all possess these traits to maintain congruity and authenticity with its brand identity. The consistency of traits between Nike and the endorser is what makes the brand so successful. Nike's marketing efforts focused on representing its athletes as pure and passionate to their respective sports opposed to being driven by commercialism, which reinforces the authenticity of the brand (Goldman & Papson, 1998). Nike has clearly found a successful formula for identifying the right personalities of professional athletes to endorse its brand, and majority of these athletes exhibit high levels of conscientiousness, extroversion, and agreeableness to a similar degree that leaders do.

## Conclusion

The previous case studies demonstrate that company founders, corporate executives, and celebrity endorsers impact the way consumers perceive a brand. The people representing a brand are crucial to the establishment of its personality, and a well-received brand personality increases a brand's image, reputation, and overall equity. The personality traits of brand executives, founders, and endorsers undoubtedly transfer into their respective brand's personality. After analyzing the personalities of Johnson & Johnson executives, Apple founder and CEO Steve Jobs, and celebrity athlete endorsers for Nike, all the personalities contained traits of leadership within the big five personality dimensions. The most commonly demonstrated brand personality traits in the case studies were extraversion and conscientiousness, which were proven by Judge et. al to be the most prominent traits within leaders. Even though the personality dimensions of agreeableness and openness to experience were less prominent in the leadership studies, they are still necessary traits to project in a brand's personality depending on the industry. For instance, a fashion brand is outwardly more extraverted than one associated with making machinery. Technology brands most likely score higher on openness to experience than insurance companies. Through the analysis of these case studies, I propose that leadership traits do exist in successful brand personalities, but the emphasis of each trait differs according to industry. Leadership traits that exist in brand personalities are powerful, and therefore important to the way a brand is perceived.

Brand developers and managers of companies would benefit from linking what we know about human leadership traits and human personality in order to build a more effective corporate brand. However, further research is needed to understand

leadership traits beyond the big five personality dimensions. Future studies should incorporate the use of human subjects in focus groups to further assess whether or not brand personalities possess leadership traits. It would then be beneficial to statistically test a correlation between leadership traits within a brand's personality and the financial success of the brand. I have taken a broad approach to connect leadership with brand personalities, but more substantial evidence is needed to solidify this speculation.



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