Understanding Brand Personality of Premier Soccer League Teams in South Africa: Scale Validation

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Abstract

Brand personality has the ability to distinguish one brand from other competing brands. In the sports market, sport marketers leverage the concept of brand personality to position their teams more competitively within the league and to enhance team identification among supporters. Furthermore, the brand personality of a team can result in better sponsorship deals. This study aimed to validate the scale of brand personality for 16 professional sports teams participating in the Premier Soccer League (PSL) in South Africa. A convenience sampling method was utilized for the study, incorporating descriptive and single cross-sectional research designs. Data was collected from a sample size of 435 participants using a self-administered questionnaire. The confirmatory factor analysis results validated the brand personality scale of 16 PSL teams as a three-factor structure that includes the dimensions of successfulness, ruggedness and sincerity. Furthermore, the study's results demonstrated the internal consistency and composite reliability of the measurement model, along with its construct, convergent, discriminant, and nomological validity. The measurement model exhibited no evidence of multicollinearity among the factors, and the model fit indices namely: IFI, TLI, CFI, SRMR, and RMSEA indicated a well-fitting model. This study concluded that this three-factor model is a reliable and valid instrument to measure the brand personality of PSL teams and is also the first scale to validate the brand personality of 16 PSL teams in the South African context.

Keywords: Brand, Brand Personality, PSL, Validation, South Africa.

Introduction

Mamelodi Sundowns F.C. is the most successful team in South Africa with more PSL titles than any other team in the Premier Soccer League (PSL) history – they have 13 PSL titles in their trophy cabinet (GoalBall, 2023). Without any doubt, Mamelodi Sundowns is

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"*successful*" regarding their brand personality. The concept of brand personality has been popular among marketers. This concept has the power to distinguish one brand from other competing brands within the same category. Similarly, the concept of brand personality has been extensively applied across various sectors, including the clothing industry, automotive industry, higher education institutions, and sports teams. The literature presents many scales developed outside South Africa to measure the brand personality of a brand for different categories. Indeed, a number of scales are available in the literature to measure the brand personality of sport teams. Table 1 presents brand personality scales designed to assess the brand personality of professional sports teams outside of South Africa.

Table 1: Scales to Measure Sport Brand Personality Outside South Africa

Authors	Dimensions	No. of Items
Braustein & Ross (2010)	Successful	14
	Sophisticated	10
	Sincerity	7
	Rugged	3
	Community-driven	3
	Classic	3
Tsiotsou (2012)	Competitiveness	5
	Prestige	5
	Morality	3
	Authenticity	3
	Morality	2
Kang et al. (2013)	Agreeableness	5
	Emotionality/Extraversion	8
	Openness	5
	Conscientiousness	4
	Honesty	6
Kim et al. (2012)	Competence	9
	Creativity	8
	Ruggedness	7
	Excitement	4
	Energy	6
	Sincerity	3
Schade et al. (2014)	Extraversion	6
	Rebellious	3
	Open-mindedness	5
	Conscientiousness	4

Source: (Braustein & Ross, 2010; Tsiotsou, 2012; Kang et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2012; Schade et al., 2014)

The above scales were carefully evaluated and one out of five scales (Braustein & Ross, 2010) was selected to be validated in South Africa. The scale of Braustein & Ross (2010) was the first scale developed to measure the brand personality of a sport team after the original

brand personality scale of Aaker (1997). In addition, the scale was the only scale with more items (40) than the other brand personality scales. Numerous studies have been conducted in South Africa to assess the brand personality of sports teams. Nevertheless, no studies have been conducted to validate brand personality scales for sports teams developed outside of South Africa. Consequently, the objective of this study is to validate the brand personality scale of Braustein & Ross (2010) among PSL sport teams in South Africa.

The Premier Soccer League
The Premier Soccer League is popularly known as its abbreviation PSL and was founded in 1996 (PSL, 2021). PSL features 16 teams per season. Each team plays 30 games in the PSL. The season calendar allows two teams to play games together at home and away. PSL awards team points based on the outcomes of the games, for example, three points are awarded to the winning team. Teams are awarded one point each for a draw in a match. The PSL teams are expected to perform well in order to avoid relegation and play-offs in a given season. A team will be relegated automatically to National First Division (NFD) if it finishes last on the log table, while a team that finishes at number 15 is given a chance to maintain its PSL position by playing play-offs with NFD teams. If the team wins the play-off, it will be retained within the PSL; in contrast, if it loses in the play-offs with teams from the NFD, the team will transfer to the NFD league.

Beside the main league, the PSL also gives teams the chance to compete in different competitions. There are three competitions offered to teams under the PSL, namely: The MTN8; the Carling Knockout Cup; and the Nedbank Cup. Terms and conditions are presented to a PSL team as prerequisite to participate in each competition. The MTN8 is named after its sponsor, Mobile Telephone Network, abbreviated as MTN. The competition features the eight teams who finished as the top eight in the last PSL season. The winner of the MTN8 wins the amount of R8000 000 (Ditlhobolo, 2023). The second competition played under the PSL is the Carling Knockout featuring all 16 PSL teams. The 16 teams in the PSL receive R550 000 for participating (Ditlhobolo, 2023; Madyira et al., 2023). R850 000 is awarded toteams reaching the quarter finals (SoccerLaduma, 2023). Carling BlackLabel awards R1350 000 to teams reaching the semi-finals (Madyira et al., 2023). The winner of the Carling Knockout Cup takes away R6850 000, while, the runner-up pockets R2850 000 (Madyira et al., 2023; SportsClub, 2023). In contrast, the NedbankCup is inclusive for all teams participating in the PSL: eight teams from the National First Division (NFD) and eight teams from SAFA's regional league (PSL-2, 2024). Each team receives R100 000 for participating in the competition known as the last 32 stage (Kappel, 2023). R200 000 is awarded to the 16 teams who make it to the last half of the tournament. R400 000 is awarded to teams who go through to the quarter finals. The prices start to increase for teams managing to book a spot in the semi-finals and are worth R1000 000. The winner of the competition takes R7 000 000 home (Ditlhobolo, 2023), while the runner-up team receives R 2.500 000 (Kappel, 2023; Ditlhobolo, 2023).

Brand Personality
Brand personality is defined asa set of characteristics assigned to a brand (Aaker, 1997). For example, the BMW brand is perceived a supper class and charming (Carlson et al., 2009). It is clear from the definition and example of brand personality presented above that brand is being treated like a human being by given it the characteristics of a human being. These characteristics are generated by consumers based on brand experience building towards perceptions. Marketers and brand managers should consistently aim to develop a brand personality that aligns with the characteristics of their target markets. Consumers bond with brands complementing their own personalities. Similarly, fans bond with sport teams complementing their own personalities – as a sport team is also regarded as a brand with personality (Tsiotsou, 2012). Understanding brand personality is important for the future success of brands in the sport industry (Walsh et al., 2023).

Brand personality is also important for professional sport teams as it is a marketing tool that differentiates a brand from other brands and influence consumer decisions (Walsh et al., 2023). Consumers use brand personality to express their self-image (Keller & Richey, 2006). A professional sport team attracts fans who believe that the brand personality of a sport team reflects their own self-image. For example, Kaizer Chiefs is perceived as a brand that is promoting peace and is likely to attract fans who perceive themselves as peaceful people. Farhat and Khan (2011) emphasised that strong brand personality has the ability to influence consumers to remain loyal towards a brand. A strong brand personality for a professional sport team could be past and current winning records. As such, the old winning records of a sport team combined with its present winning records can encourage fans to remain with the sport team resulting in brand loyalty, such as the fans of Mamelodi Sundowns F.C. This sport team is known for its excellent winning record in PSL, surpassing any other teams in PSL. Such a brand personality sets a team apart and unique from other sports teams. In addition, Mamelodi Sundowns F.C. has attracted many partners interested to partner with them for sponsorship purposes.

Theoretical Background
The concept of brand personality is grounded in the idea that humans attach human characteristics to a brand to give meaning to the product (Walsh *et al*. 2023). Therefore, it is important to identify theory that can be used as guide to understand the concept of brand personality better. The self-congruence theory was selected as the perfect theory to lay the foundation for brand personality for the current study. The self-congruence theory states that consumers select those brands carrying symbolic value that empower them to represent or enhance their actual or desired self-image in order for them to derive emotional benefits from it (Kuenzel & Halliday, 2010). Correspondingly, consumers use brand personality to express their actual or idealised self-image to a specific brand (Keller & Richey, 2006). In other words, the self-congruence theory emphasises that the concept of brand personality influences brand identification (Kuenzel & Halliday, 2010). For example, Mamelodi Sundowns F.C. is perceived as a successful team and has the potential to attract fans who idealise their own self-image as being successful. The objective of this study is to validate the brand personality scale developed in other countries for application to Premier Soccer League

(PSL) teams in South Africa. The congruence theory clearly shows that the brand personality of the PSL teams influences fans when choosing their favourite PSL teams. Consequently, the theory of self-congruence helps us to understand the concept of brand personality among the fans of the PSL teams in South Africa.

Method

A descriptive research design combined with a quantitative research method was utilized to achieve the objective of this study: validating the brand personality scale, developed by another country, of professional sport teams to the PLS teams in South Africa. A self-administrated questionnaire was used to collect data to conduct analysis for the study. The questionnaire featured measurement items adapted from the scale currently under investigation (validation in South Africa) developed by Braunstein and Ross (2010). The scale was validated inthe country of origin. The questionnaire for the current study consisted of three sections: A, B, and C. Section A collected demographic information from the participants; Section B assessed participants' sports interests; and Section C included questions related to the perceived brand personality of their preferred PSL teams. Additionally, in Section C, participants evaluated the questions using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree).

A convenience sampling method, a type of non-probability sampling, was employed during the data collection process. The target population for this study comprised Generation Y university students. Generation Y is the largest population group compared to any other population group in South Africa. The majority of them were university students enrolled for tertiary qualifications. Two universities, one traditional university and one university of technology, both situated in the Gauteng Province South Africa, were selected to get these participants.

The Statistical Package for Social Science (abbreviated SPSS) and the Analysis of Moment Structurers (abbreviated as AMOS), version 27 Windows, were utilised for the data analysis of the study. Descriptive statistics, reliability and correlation analysis were also utilised in this study. Furthermore, confirmatory factor analysis SEM was used to validate the scale as per research objective of the study.

Results

Reliability and Correlation Analysis

Table 2 below displays the results of the reliability and correlation of the study. Malhotra (2010) highlighted that all Cronbach alpha variables to be considered reliable for a study must be above 0.60. All the Cronbach alpha variables for this study were above 0.60. Malhotra (2010) and Hair (2010) emphasised the importance of composite reliability and convergent validity for addition support. Composite reliability produced values in excess of .70 and average extracted produced values in excess of .50. Therefore, this study is reliable. There is a correlation between all variables in the study. Furthermore, all variables are statistically significant in the expected direction. The multicollinearity was assessed and no correlation coefficient above 0.90 was discovered.

Table 2: Reliability and Correlation Analysis

Variables	(α)	Successfulness	Ruggedness	Sincerity
Successfulness	0.916	1000		
Ruggedness	0.805	0.508	1000	
Sincerity	0.785	0.478	0.526	1000

Fit indices namely the Chi-square/degrees of freedom (λ2/df), the goodness of fit (GFI), the adjusted goodness of fit (AGFI), the standardised root mean residual (RMSEA), the normed fit index (NFI), the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), the comparative fit index (CFI) and the incremental fit index (IFI) were employed to assess the model. For a model to be fit, the λ2/df must be above 0.30, the GFI above 0.9, the AGFI above 0.80, the RMSEA above 0.08, the NFI above 0.90 above, the TLI above 0.90, the CFI above 0.90, and the IFI above 0.90 (Malhotra, 2010; Hair, 2010).

Table 3: Recommended Values for Model Fit Indices

	Thresholds		
	Poor	Acceptable	Good
CMIN/DF	Above 5	Between [3-5]	Less than 3
RMSEA	Above .1	Between [.06-.1]	Less than .05
NFI	Less than .80	Between [.80-.90]	Above .90
CFI	Less than .90	Between [.80-.90]	Above .90
TLI	Less than .80	Between [.80-.90]	Above .90
GFI	Less than .80	Between [.80-.90]	Above .90
AGFI	Less than .80	Between [.80-.90]	Above .80

There results of this study met the requirements of the model fit (λ2/df 2.956, GFI 0.93, AGFI 0.90, RMSEA 0.06, NFI 0.92, TLI 0.93, CFI 0.95, and IFI 0.95). The goodness of fit indexes were calculated to assess the reliability of the model. Therefore, the study perfectly fit the model as presented in figure 1.
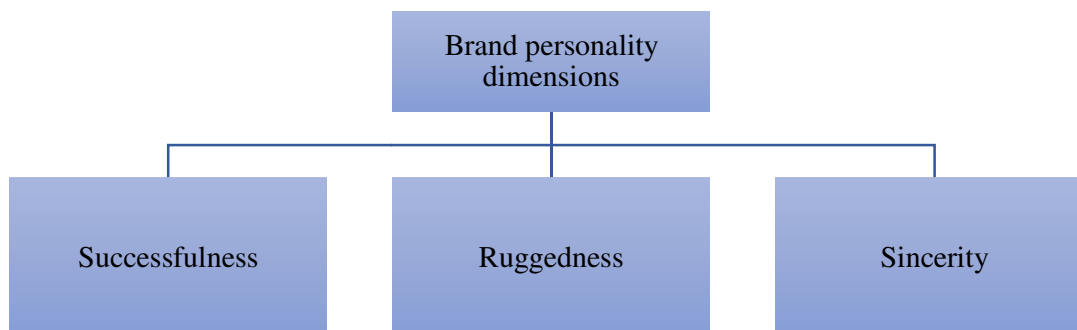

Fig. 1: International Brand Personality Applicable to South Africa

Out of six dimensions (*successfulness; sophistication; ruggedness; sincerity*; *community driven and classic*), only three dimensions (*successfulness; ruggedness and sincerity*) were found to be valid to measure perceptions of brand personality among fans of the PSL teams in South Africa.

Discussion and Managerial Implications

There are many scales available from the literature to measure brand personality, like the scales developed to measure the perceived brand personality of professional sport teams. All of those scales were developed and validated intheir country of origin. The majority of the researchers adopted some of those scales and applied them in other countries. Most of the time, the findings of these studies were inconclusive because of cultural issues such as the language of the original scale. Other studies translated the language used to the language of the country where the adopted scale was employed. Sometimes the translations from one culture to another culture lost their original meaning, while some scales adopted from other countries worked perfectly. Therefore, it important for marketers, scholars and sport team marketers interested in investigating the perceived brand personality of professional sport teams to validate the scale in the country of interest before conducting a massive research project. The measurement model assessed in this study had six dimensions to measure the brand personality of professional sport teams. The results of this study found that only three dimensions, *successfulness; ruggedness and sincerity,* were applicable to measure the brand personality perceptions of premier soccer league teams in South Africa among their fans. This is problematic as half of the dimensions (sophistication; community driven and classic) were found to be irrelevant when measuring the brand personality perceptions of premier soccer league teams among fans. Marketers and sport team marketers are advised to consider the existing brand personality scales developed and validated in South Africa to measure the brand personality of sport teams before considering international scales such as the one validated in this study. In doing so, marketers will get a true reflection of brand personality perceptions of premier soccer league teams in South Africa among their fans. Alternatively, the valid dimensions (*successfulness; ruggedness and sincerity*) found in this study to be applicable to measure the perceived brand personality of premier soccer league teams can be used in conjunction with scales developed and validated in South African to measure brand personality.

Limitations, Future Research and Conclusion

Like any research study, this study has certain limitations that should be acknowledged. Its primary objective was to validate the scale developed by Braunstein and Ross (2012) to measure the perceived brand personality of Premier Soccer League (PSL) teams in South Africa. However, data collection was limited to a single province, Gauteng, which may not fully represent the diverse views of football fans across the country. This geographical limitation affects the generalizability of the findings, as regional differences in cultural and sporting preferences may influence how PSL teams are perceived.

To address this limitation, future research should extend data collection to include all nine provinces of South Africa. A broader, more inclusive sample would ensure a comprehensive

validation of the scale and provide a more accurate reflection of the perceptions of South African football fans towards their PSL favourite sports teams. Furthermore, while this study employed a quantitative research approach, future studies could benefit from incorporating qualitative methodology to gain deeper insights into consumer perceptions. Alternatively, a mixed methods approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative techniques, could offer a more understanding of the perceived brand personality of PSL teams. Despite the limitations, this study makes a valuable contribution by validating an established scale within the South African context. The findings provide a foundation for future research and offer practical implications for PSL teams managers and marketers aiming to strengthen brand positioning. By expanding the scope of the study and incorporating diverse research methods, future studies can build upon these insights to develop a more comprehensive understanding of brand personality in South African football.

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