

An Empirical Research on Brand Personality of Smart phone

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Abstract: Brand personality is an important basis of the research on brand equity, brand image and brand extension, so the analysis of practical problems using brand personality theory system and measurement method is always the focus in academe and business circle. Although smart phone is a communication tool, it has the characteristics of the computer. Now smart phone has passed an important milestone, it will exceed half of total cell phone production in 2013. Emerging market countries such as China will be the main place in the evolution of smart phone. The respective market shares of Chinese and foreign smart phone brands are constantly changing during the competition, the new brand has the opportunity of success in the short term. By empirical research of Sino-foreign smart phone brand personality in China, this paper summarizes the attractive characteristics of the smart phone brand personality, and the difference in segments. Based on brand personality scale of Aaker in 1997, the paper studies 1335 samples via online consumer survey in China. The conclusions provide important ideas on brand marketing strategy and tactics for smart phone related enterprises.

Key Words: smart phone, brand personality, segment, Chinese and foreign brands

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1.Research Overview

1.1 Study Motivation

With an increasing market competition and consumer consciousness, the product function and quality is getting homogeneous, symbolism such as personality or identity becomes the important factor with which consumer identifies the different products. Therefore brand marketing has become an important means of competition. Brand is a name, term, mark, symbol, design, or a combination of these elements, is used to identify a seller or

sellers of goods and services, and distinguish between them and the competitors. Just like people have personality, brand has personality too. Brand personality refers to the combination of personality traits associated with a given brand. It includes gender, age, social and economic status as well as in the traditional sense of the human nature characteristics such as warm, caring and sentimental.

Brand personality model can help the brand strategists a lot, such as making them better understanding of the brand awareness and attitude of the customer, leading brand image differentiation and brand communication activities, and creating brand equity.

Brand equity is strategic , which is the basis for competitive advantage and long-term profitable assets, so business managers often pay close attention to brand equity. Brand personality creates brand equity mainly in three ways. First, it enables customer to express their identity with tools; Second, the brand personality metaphor reveals the relationship between customers and brands, just like human relationship ; Finally, brand equity can reflect and hint product benefits and properties effectively.

Therefore, the brand personality is sustainable for a long time. It is a focus of the brand image and an important source of product differentiation. Research and measurement of brand personality is very important for marketing scholars and enterprises. This is the motivation of the paper.

1.2 Research Significance

The research object of this paper is the brand of smart phone. Global feature phone production was only 1.1 billion in 2012, which declined by 18% compared with 2011. While smart phone production increased by 43%, reaching 675 million. According to market research company “BI Intelligence”, prediction of smart phone production will reach 907 million in 2013, accounting for 51% of the total cell phone market. Now the development of smart phone has passed an important milestone. According to the forecast of next five years, smart phone production will reach 1.5 billion in 2017, with annual compound growth rate of 18%, which is expected to reach 81% of the total cell phone market. Emerging market countries such as China will be the main place in the evolution of smart phone. As European and American market is close to saturation, the upside is limited. Therefore, countries such as Brazil, Russia, India, China, are the future of the smart phone market. Chinese smart phone firms are expected to lead the smart phone markets in emerging countries with the experience of low-cost market.

Due to the weak durability and rapid innovation, smart phone enjoys the sales growth. smart phone which is became our only irreplaceable technology equipment has replaced many devices, such as digital camera, reader, music and video player, game console, etc. In other words, when consumers buy a smart phone, they get not only a phone and internet access, but also a camera, music player and gaming device. For western countries, multi-equipment complex is not a major advantage, because they have a variety of equipment users. But it is a major bright spot to low income consumers in developing countries. Chinese proportion of the global smart phone market increased by 10%, reaching 26% in the fourth quarter of 2012. China has overtaken the United States and become the largest smart phone market in the world at present.

Since Apple launched the first generation of iPhone in 2007, and Google published

android open source platform, great changes have taken place in the world pattern of mobile phone market. The hardware market is dominated by Samsung and Apple. Motorola, Nokia, Blackberry etc are squeezed into the second camp. It cannot be ignored that Chinese mobile phone firms are growing up in China's local and overseas markets. There are more than 100 large or small smart phone firms in China, such as Lenovo, HUAWEI, ZTE, Coolpad, Mi and so on. They all have some market shares, and the competition is fierce. We believe that it is necessary to study Sino-foreign smart phone brand personality and put forward some suggestions for the brand of smart phone in the Chinese market. It has certain significance for the brand marketing of smart phone firms and development of the brand in the future.

1.3 Innovations

The innovations and research values of this paper are as follows.

1. We researched the theories of the brand personality dimensions by using the method of literature review in this paper. Then we selected the authoritative method for the measurement of brand personality. Firstly, we carried on the preliminary survey of brand personality of the smart phone. Secondly, we simplified the brand personality scale in order to improve the efficiency. We believe that it will have certain reference significance for the future measurement.
2. Although there are some papers about brand personality of the mobile phone market, there is little special literature about the smart phone, the intelligent product which is emerging and changing human life . This paper has certain innovation in this sense.
3. While the researches comparing the differences between Chinese and foreign brand personality already exist, we focus on the comparison research of brand personality in different market segments of smart phone that is innovation thinking.

2.Literature Review

2.1 Brand Personality Related Theories

Brand personality was first mentioned by Grey Global Group in the 60s (Gardner, Levy 1955, Plummer 1985). And before the 80s, the early stage of theoretical studies, brand personality was considered equal to brand image by most marketing academics (Birdwell,1968, Freling & Forbes, 2005). Some of them even combined the two terms to a new one, brand character (Bellenger, Earle& Wilbur, 1976). Their researches are one-sided, emphasizing the consistency between brand personality and image but neglecting the differences.

In the 80s, theories about dimensions of brand personality are develop to be mainstream and widely accepted. Academics take brand personality as an important constitute of brand image (brand performance, personality, corporate image) instead of the unique one [1](Keller,1993, Hayes, 2000). Academics do further research from different prospective, from consumer to corporate. Viewing from consumer, academics tend to stress the meaning of consumers' perception and self-expression of a brand. For example, Batra, Lehmann and Singh (1993) define that brand personality is the category of traits consumer perceived from a certain brand's performance [2]. Keller makes it further. He thinks that brand personality is consumer's feeling about a certain brand. Something helps them symbolize and express themselves better than product characteristic does [1]. Viewing from corporate, academics incline to believe that brand personality is a series of traits owned by a brand. And the

personality can be described by terms from human personality traits [3] (Sirgy,1982, Goodyear, 1993, Aaker &Fournier, 1995).

Coming to the 90s,the academic researching on brand personality tried to establish a model of personality dimensions, such as Heylen dimensions of brand personality model, Aaker brand personality dimensions model [4].Which, Aaker summed up the five dimensions of brand personality, Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication and Ruggedness. She also resolved the dimensions into 15 facets and cited 42 typical traits. Later, Aaker cooperated with Japanese and Spanish academics, and realized the uniqueness of brand personality dimension among different cultural contexts. For example, the American unique dimension is ruggedness, while Japan is the “peacefulness”. Spanish is “passion”. Although Aaker’s finding raises doubts in its validity (Azoulay, 2003) and universality (Austin, Siguwaw & Mattila, 2003), it gets the widest range of recognition, and is better in operation and practice. Therefore, our research is based on Aaker’s brand personality dimension.

At present, the domestic brand personality research mainly has two aspects. One is to build up the personality dimension adapting to the Chinese consumer culture. Another is to explore how brand personality affects the brand asset and consumer behavior.

In regard to the building of dimension, there are two research directions. One is inclined to believe that the brand personality will be influenced by industry characteristics. That is, the brand personality of different industries will have obvious distinction. They try to study in specific industry, to establish the brand personality dimensions in the certain industry. For example, Liu Yong (2008) summarized cigarette brand personality dimensions as the Pursuit of Excellence, Carefree, Success, Bold, Peaceful, Alcohol and Fragrance, Pure and Fresh and Natural, the Mystery of the Different Region Amorous Feelings, Friendship, Honor and Believable. Chen Ke etc. (2008) describe the digital camera's brand personality as Sincere, Competence, Strong, Delicate and Stimulation. Another is inclined to believe that brand personality can be affected by geography and culture. Huang Shengbing, Lu Taihong try [5] summarizes the Chinese brand personality dimensions as Benevolence, Wisdom, Courage, Happiness and Elegance.

2.2 The Articles about Foreign and Domestic Mobile Phone Brands

In china's mobile market, foreign brands dominate in brand strength and appealing, such as Samsung, Apple. Compared with domestic brands, Chinese consumers are more willing to trust foreign brands and rate them higher. This behavior has attracted the attention of domestic academics. They are active in exploring the factors influencing domestic and foreign brands in brand strength.

Consumers' behavior and attitudes and deemed to be one of the explanations. By observing the different attitudes of consumers for domestic and foreign brand, Wang Haizhong etc. (2005)[9] found that Chinese consumers tend to produce strong ambivalence when making choice between domestic and foreign brands. Further study found that consumers with health ethnocentrism are more likely to buy domestic brands. And Zhang Li (2007) has observed the college students purchasing foreign mobile phone [10]. Research shows that consumers with insufficient consuming experience act out a herd mentality when selecting mobile phone brands. However, when consumers have more experience, the herd mentality effect greatly abates. They are willing to choose a brand according to their own product judgment. In addition, consumer culture is also one of the key factors that influence

consumer behavior. For example, the products from developed country win wide recognition among Chinese consumers. And it is one of the strong helper for foreign brands to beat domestic brand.

2.3 The Product Features and Brand Landscape of Smart Phone

Smartphone, refers to mobile phone which works like personal computers, has an independent operating system. Users can install software and games provided by the third party service providers, in order to extend the function of the mobile phone. And it can connect to mobile Internet through mobile communication network (definition from Baidu encyclopedia).

Compared to traditional feature phone, smart phone has five characteristics. First, smart phones can support GSM network or CDMA network or 3G network, and even 4 G networks. That is, it supports wireless Internet access. Second, smart phone has the function of the PDA, such as PIM (Personal Information Management), memos, task management, multimedia applications, browsing the web, etc. Third, smart phones are similar to personal computers, with the independent CPU and ROM as well as the opening operating system (android, ios6, etc.). Forth, smart phone is more user friendly. It can extend the function in real-time according to individual need, such as extending built-in function, updating software.. Fifth, smart phone is more powerful in functions. Users can install all kinds of application to extend the function.

In 2013, the brand pattern of smart phone made a big change. Established foreign brands like Nokia and Motorola are decaying and losing their market share. Meanwhile Chinese local manufacturer brands are growing rapidly, turning to be a great threat to the domination of Samsung and Apple. According to Canalys market research, in the first quarter of 2013 of the global market, Samsung occupied the first place with 26.6% market share. Apple ranked second with 19.3%. The third was Lenovo, getting 5%. Sony and HUAWEI followed. Among the top five mobile phone brands, whose market share reached 57.2%, Chinese brands accounted for two seats. However, in Chinese smart phone market, Samsung with a 20% market share ranks first, followed by Coolpad, HUAWEI, and Lenovo. Apple came back in the fifth in the first quarter, with 8% market share. It is important to note that 68% of smart phone shipments came from domestic manufacturers in Chinese market in the first quarter of this year,

3. Research Design and Data Collection

3.1 Pre-survey of Measuring Tool of Brand Personality

Based on Aaker's brand personality model in 1997, which listed five dimensions including Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication and Ruggedness (42 phrases of brand personality), we carried on the preliminary investigation at first (including five groups of focus discussion for qualitative research and 50 samples of questionnaire for quantitative research). In order to simplify the measuring tool, we collected the data of the domestic consumer's description of brand personality of smart phone through pre-survey. We selected the main phrases of brand personality of smart phone at last. Only 15 personality phrases were surveyed in formal investigation. There are three phrases for each dimension, which are as follows: Sincerity (down to earth, traditional, honest); Excitement (up to date, young, fashion); Competence (reliable, intelligent, technical); Sophistication (charming, beautiful, feminine);

Ruggedness(masculine, tough, outdoorsy).

3.2 Formal Investigation Research Purposes

There are three main purposes. (1)To understand the consumer's perception of brand value hierarchy of Sino-foreign smart phone including awareness, consideration, usage, like, and recommendation; (2)To research brand personality of the major smart phone brands in Chinese market;(3)To explore and compare brand personality preference differences in the different segments of smart phone .

3.3 Data Collection

All data collection is completed by online questionnaire survey of China telecom consumer research lab members (www.esaying.cn) from November 7th. to 26th. in 2012. There are some conditions to respondents as follows.(1)They should be a member of 15 to 55 years old in China.(2) They should have basic cognitive for smart phones.(3) They should be smart phone users or potential buyers.(4) They should be mobile phone decision-makers or have important influence to purchase mobile phone.(5)They should not work in market research company and sensitive industries such as telecommunications.

3.4 Sample Size and Representation

The research collected 1335 valid samples, covering the whole country and all telecom operators. For better representativeness of the sample, we weighted the data by five dimensions of gender, age, operators, personal income, place of residence. The following is the weighted standard shown in table 1.

Table 1. Weighting Efficient of the Five Dimensions

GENDER		AGE							
Male	Female	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-55
48.86%	51.14%	10.23%	14.00%	12.40%	11.55%	12.34%	14.92%	13.80%	10.75%

OPERATOR			PERSONAL MONTHLY INCOME (YUAN)			
China Mobile	China Unicom	China Telecom	Below 1000	1000-2499	2500-4999	Above 5000
64.64%	21.24%	14.12%	11.11%	44.45%	33.33%	11.11%

RESIDENCE					
North-east	North China	East China	South China	South-west	North-west
8.19%	13.71%	31.85%	27.22%	11.80%	7.23%

Note: Gender, age, personal monthly income refer to the 2010 census data, operators and residence data refer to the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology and telecom operators.

3.5 Questionnaire Design

Formal questionnaire is divided into four parts. The first part is identification part, the purpose is to choose smart phone users or potential users in the coming year. The second part is the research of brand awareness, brand usage and brand preference, the purpose is to investigate consumer's perception of brand value hierarchy of Chinese and foreign smart phone including awareness, consideration, usage, like, and recommendation, brand premium, and consumer's choices between the Chinese and foreign brands of smart phone. The third part is brand personality of mobile phone, the purpose is to investigate consumer's choice

among 15 personality phases of the most commonly used three brands. The fourth part is the background and value orientation. The total questionnaire is 26 questions.

4. Research Conclusions

4.1 Brand Value Hierarchy of Sino-foreign Mobile Phone

From the view of overall brand value, foreign brands as well as Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan brands have obvious advantages. Apple and Samsung are far ahead, and the following is HTC and Nokia. Domestic smart phone brand value is low, the performance of Mi, HUAWEI and Lenovo is relatively good, which is better than the international brands such as Motorola, Blackberry etc.

From the view of the performance of specific levels, brand value of Samsung is close to that of apple, but their relationship of different levels with consumers reflects a big difference. Apple is the first brand of awareness and like for most consumers, while Samsung is considered, used, and recommended for most consumers. Apple is the most popular, while Samsung is closer to consumers. Except having large users, HTC and Nokia are far from Apple and Samsung at other levels (see figure 1).

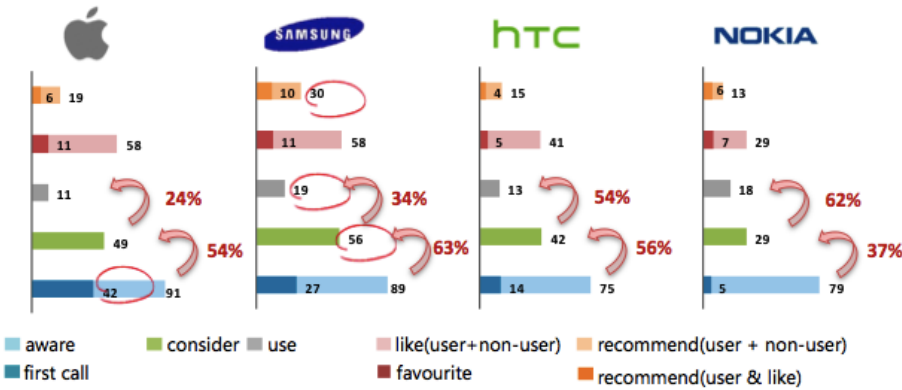


Figure 1. Chinese and Foreign Brand Value Level of Smart Phone -1

There is obvious gap between foreign brands as well as Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan brands and Mi, HUAWEI, Lenovo at all levels. Among the three leading domestic brands, Mi has more awareness and like, HUAWEI and Lenovo have more consideration and usage. In the relationship with consumers, the patterns of brand level of Mi and Apple are similar. This result may come from their similar marketing mode, such as advocating fans culture(see figure 2).

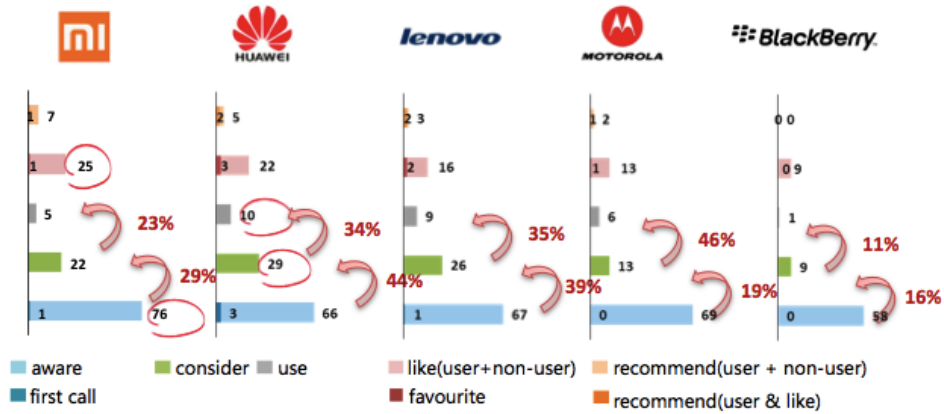


Figure 2. Chinese and Foreign Brand Value Level of Smart Phone -2

4.2 Sino-foreign brand personality of smart phone

On the whole, consumer’s perception of brand personality of smart phone is close to “sincerity”, “excitement” and “competence”(see figure 3).

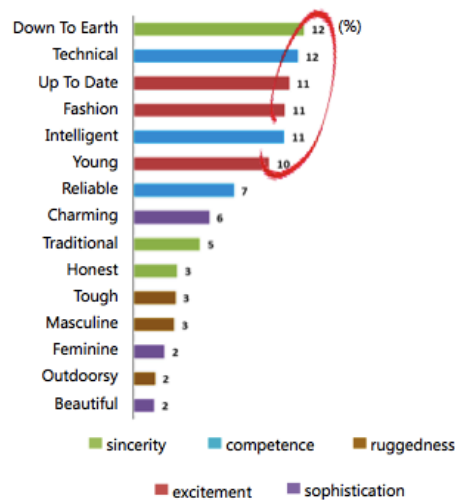


Figure 3.the Frequency of Brand Personality Phases of Smart Phone

Comparison of Chinese and foreign brand personality of smart phone, we can find that personality of foreign brands as well as Hong Kong and Macao brands is more "competent", personality of domestic brands is more "sincere ". According to the brand value hierarchy, we divided Chinese and foreign brands into four different camps. The differences of their brand personality are as follows.

To the first camp of foreign brands as well as Hong Kong and Macao brands, Samsung, Apple and HTC is all close to " excitement " and " competence ", but they also have their own characteristics. Apple is the most "exciting ", almost nobody think that it is "sincere " . Samsung is more " competent ", and also is "exciting"; HTC’s personality is not too outstanding, and it is a little "sincere". To the second camp of foreign brands as well as Hong Kong and Macao brands, their personality is very different. Nokia and Motorola are

"competent", "sincere", but not "exciting". Sony is "exciting" and "sophisticated", but not "competent". SonyEricsson is "exciting", BlackBerry is "Rugged", and LG is "sincere"(see figure 4).

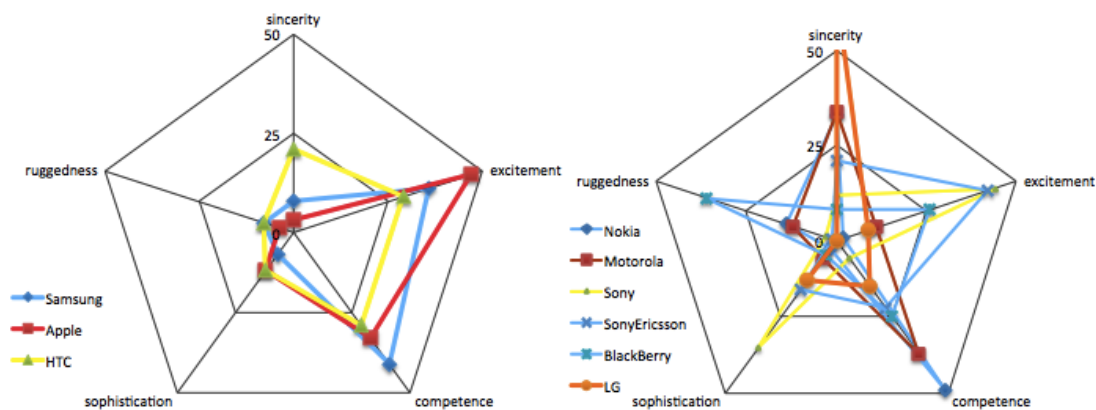


Figure 4. Foreign /Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan Brand Personality of Smart Phone

To the first camp of domestic brands, three domestic brands personality of good performance is close to “excitement”, “sincerity” and “competence”. Mi is the most "exciting", Lenovo is "competent" and "sincerity", but not "exciting", HUAWEI's personality of the three aspects is very balanced. To the second camp of domestic brands, their personality is not "competent", the personality of ZTE and K-touch is similar and mainly is "sincerity", Coolpad is "exciting"; OPPO is "sophisticated" and "exciting", Meizu's personality is not outstanding, and it is a little "exciting"(see figure 5).

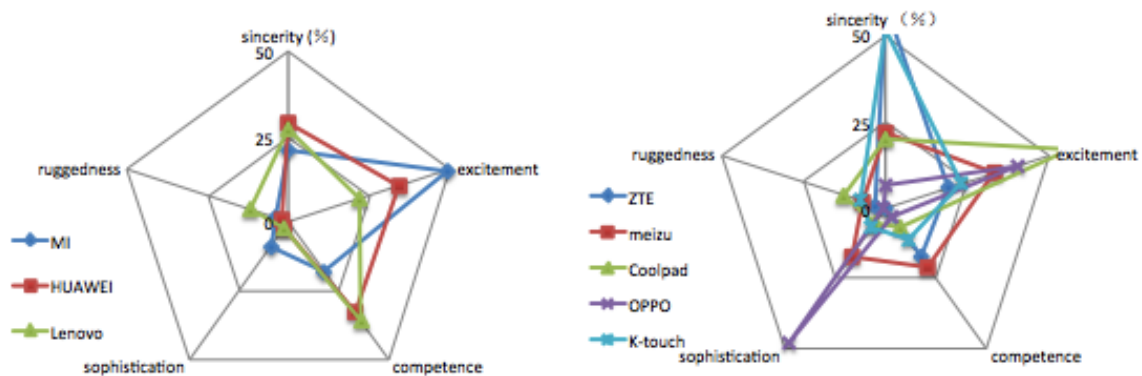


Figure 5. Domestic Brand Personality of Smart Phone

4.3 comparison of brand personality in the different segments

Taking into account the various indicators, such as life values, benefits of mobile phone, mobile phone consuming behavior and demographic data, by the clustering method called Latent Class, we divided smart phone users into five segments. We named them: leadership-oriented, family-oriented, information-oriented, practical-oriented and cool-oriented, the proportion of five segments is nearly the same.

The typical image of leadership-oriented consumers is successful men, who are used to be a focus with charisma. They have economic power and pay attention to identity, status and

are easy to accept new things, new technology. They hope to distinguish themselves by mobile phone and become a leader and focus. Family the typical image of family-oriented consumers is family women, who care for their family and pay attention to health problems such as phone radiation. They hope that mobile phone can make life convenient and communication effective. The typical image of information-oriented consumers is young men, who are not very rich and pay attention to the function of mobile phone. They pursue new product, new technology and new function. They are willing to study the usage of new technology, and they have their own thoughts and ideas, hoping to affect people around. The typical image of practical-oriented consumers is middle-aged family people, who have decent economic foundation but pinch pennies. Their requirements for mobile phone are not rigorous, and they only want it to help their daily work and life. They pay attention to the rationality of price when they buy mobile phones. The typical image of cool-oriented consumers is young people, who love to be cool and want mobile phone with all functions to meet their entertainment.

Through description of brand personality of smart phone that consumers consider to buy, we can know what kind of brand personality that consumers of each segment prefer. The same conclusion is that every segment prefer "excitement". The different points are as follows. Cool-oriented consumers prefer "competence". Practical-oriented and leadership-oriented consumers prefer "sincerity ". Leadership-oriented and information-oriented consumers prefer "sophistication". Family -oriented consumers prefer "ruggedness"(see table 2).

Table 2. Comparison of Brand Personality in Five Segments

Segment	Leadership	Practical	Information	Cool	Family
<i>Base</i>	262	284	282	269	238
unit	%	%	%	%	%
Excitement	29	28	34	32	37
Competence	29	32	32	37	22
Sincerity	22	26	17	18	17
Sophistication	14	7	13	6	8
Ruggedness	6	7	4	6	15

Note: The yellow part is significant higher than other segments at 95% confidence level.

4.4 Marketing Suggestions

1. Building brand personality of "excitement" and " competence " is helpful to improve brand value of smart phone. The study found that " excitement " and " competence " are personality genes of successful smart phone brand. Brands with these two aspects of personality are widely accepted by consumers. To foreign brands as well as Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan brands, Apple and Samsung are successful examples, HTC is also pretty good in the performance of these two aspects of personality. To domestic brands, Mi, HUAWEI and Lenovo are not balanced in these two aspects of personality, but also have good performance.

"competent " instead of " exciting " brands (such as Nokia, Motorola) are aging seriously, and their market development are held back. On the contrary," exciting " instead of " competent" brands, such as Sony, Coolpad, OPPO, their influences are limited in the market. Therefore smart phone firms should pay attention to product quality, design and consumer experience at first to ensure the personality of reliability, intelligence and technology in consumers' mind, and then should cause consumers emotion of trend, youth, and fashion by emotional appeals.

2. It is vital to avoid personality of "sincerity " when building mid-high level smart phone brands. The study found that "sincerity" has a negative effect on brand value. Practical, real and traditional brand image is not helpful for brand extension upward of smart phone. Domestic brands generally have the brand awareness of "sincerity ", such as ZTE and K-touch. Both of them sell a large amount of cheap models which are all below 1,000 Yuan in the market now. It is difficult for brands with "sincere" personality to sell high level models in the future with a single brand strategy, unless they rebuild the old brands or use new brand strategy.

3. The different brand personality preferences of segments can help brands entry into niche markets. The study found that different segments of smart phone prefer different brand personality. It suggests that brands that are not the dominant brands in the market or they are the new brands can entry into the segments. For example, leadership-oriented and information-oriented consumers prefer " sophistication ", therefore Sony and OPPO took a place of market. Cool-oriented consumers prefer " competence ", so Mi succeeded as a new brand in young trendy people. " Rugged " brands such as Blackberry have distinct personality, and they can satisfy the appetite of family-oriented consumers. " Sincere " brands can satisfy the appetite of practical-oriented consumers.

5. Limitations and Future Research Directions

5.1 Research Limitations

1. Due to the limitations of budget and time, the sample of this study is limited. Because of online survey, the conclusions of brand personality mainly represent the mainstream users of mobile phone who have the habits of using internet.

2. The brand personality scale of this study was simplified. Because of the first try, the scale may be not mature enough and there may be a certain effect on measurement accuracy of brand personality.

3. This study is a one-time study of brand personality of smart phone, we can only research by horizontal comparison with different brands, instead of longitudinal comparison from the time dimension. Therefore the depth of study is limited.

5.2 Future Research Directions

1. It is necessary to survey more consumers if the conditions of budget and time permit in the future. We need to know more about impression of brand personality of different types of smart phone consumers, so we can collect more samples to represent the majority of consumers. Then we can draw conclusions from more comprehensive and more accurate brand personality.

2. It is necessary to continue to study the survey scale in the future. Which one can accurately describe brand personality of the domestic smart phone consumers? Is that Aaker's scale or simplified scale or the other local scales? More scientific conclusions can be arrived at only

by contrast study with different scales on the condition of the same brands, the same research method and measuring method. Future research should to seek more accurate measuring method of brand personality, and analyze the applicable conditions of different measuring methods.

3. It is necessary to investigate in regular tracking. We can collect the data including brand value, market share, target positioning of every brands at different time. After the correlation analysis between the data and brand personality, we can put forward more specific suggestions of Chinese and foreign smart phone brands to improve brand marketing of smart phone in the future.

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