

THE RESTAURANT PERSONALITY SCALE

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ABSTRACT

Brand personality and attributing human characteristics to brands when evaluating them has been examined within the marketing and consumer behaviour literature in recent years. Notable has been the brand personality scale developed by Aaker (1997) which outlines 42 traits on five dimensions. This scale has demonstrated how consumers can use human metaphors or characteristics when making evaluations of brands and that a certain level of projection is required for consumers to feel they can make adequate assessments of the brands they encounter.

Establishing a particular and clearly defined store personality can be a means by which retailers differentiate themselves from competitors, allow consumers to create expectations, and guide decisions pertaining to the offering. Furthermore, having a unique personality associated to a brand allows consumers to establish perceptions and create an image which they can then use when gauging for congruency to their own expectations. This interaction is particularly important from a business standpoint as the more congruent an individual feels a location (such as a restaurant) is with their needs, which is shown to be linked to their image, the more likely they are to repatronize the location, as postulated in the satisfaction literature (Oliver 1980; Bearden & Teel, 1983).

The current measures of personality appropriate for the retail sector are the store personality scale (d'Astous & Levesque, 2003) and the brand personality scale (Aaker, 1997). However, there is nothing currently tailored to measure the personality of a restaurant. Since single-entity dining establishments make up the majority of the restaurant retail landscape, it would seem relevant to assume that distinct personality perceptions between these restaurants would be a good means for consumers to make clear distinctions between them and position them within their consideration set. Moreover, restaurant personality is inherently linked not just to consumers perceptions but also to what the restaurant projects – all the stakeholders within the restaurant itself (waiters, chefs, maitre d') as well as the items that decorate the environment (music, linens, plate presentations) all contribute to reinforcing a certain image and personality of the establishment. In consequence, does the personality the restaurant assumes it projects match the personality interpreted in the market place? How do customer assessments that spring from this perceived personality influence post consumption behaviours such as repatronage and word-of-mouth? These are all questions that show a need for a more precise personality measure for this retail environment.

The objective of this research is to develop a personality scale specific to the individual restaurant, and thus expand on the current streams of personality and retail research. While some measures are currently available, they do not conform to the needs of the individual restaurant. Restaurants comprise of some of the few retail examples where service is inherent to the experience and also where consumers purchase and consume their purchases in the same location. These much be considered when developing tools to measure consumption experience in such locations. Finally, the contributions of this scale would be its relevant use as an antecedent in satisfaction and loyalty frameworks as well as in word-of-mouth communication models for restaurants. Managerially, it could also be used to uncover inconsistencies within service encounters, those than can lead to service failure and halt repatronizing by the customers.

References available upon request.