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## Detecting the Brand Personality of Accommodation Establishments through Social Media: A Hotel Sample in Çanakkale

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### Abstract

At the present time, accommodation establishments are known to compete among themselves just like other establishments. Accommodation establishments are able to position themselves in the perception of the customers according to their product characteristics and so they obtain a competitive advantage. Therefore, it can be positioned in accommodation establishments more concretely in the minds of the customers by qualifying them with some personality traits such as people. Individuals can comment as to accommodation establishments on social media. The shares of the accommodation customers regarding the characteristics of the establishments on social media determines the perception of personality characteristics of them. Well-managed personality traits can be an important competitive advantage for establishments. This study aims to detecting the personality characteristics with respect to the hotels from sharing contents by the customers of a selected hotel in Çanakkale on social media. In the study, the brand personality scale developed by Jennifer Aaker (1997) has been used to detect the brand personality of the selected hotel. This study is based on the assumption that brand personalities can be identified by customers' comments on accommodation establishments through social media platforms. The personality of the hotel is detected by evaluating 630 sharing contents with #hotelname hashtag on Instagram social media platform of the customers who have received service from there. In this context, the comments and sharing contents with respect to the hotel have been analyzed by using content analysis method, which is one of the qualitative research methods. After the analysis, the brand personality of the hotel has been determined in three factors as sincerity, excitement-competence and sophistication.

**Keywords:** Social Media, Tourism, Brand Personality, Accommodation Establishments, Çanakkale.

### INTRODUCTION

Hospitality has come in possession of a extensive sector so that “there are not many new inventions that influence the way we sleep and way away from our houses” (Angelo and Vladimir, 2011: 4). When the functional features of a hotel are not remarkably differentiated, a hotel brand that ensures a set of promises to accommodation establishment guests and reflects guests’ desires via its brand personality, the consequence could be significant. In as much as product and phisical differences of accommodation establishments have become less of a factor, customers have changed their providence into other ways to assessment hotel performance, not based on hotel functions but based on hotel brand quality. Eventually, brand personality and brand quality can be the outstanding reasons for selecting one brand over another (Boo et al., 2009; Siguaw et al., 1999). It may be that hotel brand managers are scouting around the most effective ways to enhance their brands based on their customers’ segments. In this study, it is aimed to show that brand personalities of hotels could be detected just like other products. In this study, firstly brand and brand personality are mentioned. Then previous studies on “brand personality in tourism and hospitality literature” are examined.

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Afterwards, methodology of the study, findings and discussion of the study and results and recommendations of the study have been discussed in the study.

### **Brand and Brand Personality**

The brand could be evaluated as an significant marker which distinguishes a product from other products. The thought that brands could be represented in the way of a set of personality traits could be traced back to 1950s (Gardner and Levy, 1955; Martineau, 1958). Exactly like David Ogilvy (1983: 14) says, ‘Products, just as a people, have personalities’, Plummer (1984) and Sirgy (1985) make the similar alleges that any brand could be described in the way of not only their physical features or functional characteristics but also their characterization appearances or brand personality. Such features are used to form effects of and choice for a specific brand (Li et al. 2014).

“Teen, witty, and zealous” or “nonconforming, unique, and funny.” Which trait sounds more like you, or do this traits sound like someone you would like to be call to mind? These are brand personality traits that customers calling to Pepsi and Dr. Pepper brands, respectively (Aaker, 1996). Costumers readily appoint both positive and negative human traits to products (Aaker, 1997; Triplett, 1994). They frequently sympathise with brands as if they were people, particularly when the brands are attached to noteworthy products (Aaker, 1996).

Brand personality is “the setting of human traits associated with a brand” (Aaker, 1997: 347). Arise from the “Big Five” personality factors from personality psychology, Aaker’s theoretical framework and brand personality scale (BPS) ensure a foundation for researchers to estimate how brands could establish an identity that is uniquely differentiate from competitors and easily recognized by costumers (Li et al. 2019). In addition Aaker’s (1997) brand personality scale (BPS) based on qualitative and quantitative research. The development process ensured the validity, reliability, and generalisability of the scale in the source of brands. A total of 42 personality characteristics of the BPS have determined on five factors: excitement, sincerity, ruggedness, competence and sophistication.

Applying Aaker’s 42 traits (Aaker, 1997) to accommodation establishment brands, the authors of this study supposed that the following brands might inclose to their own brand personality. Kimpton hotels created a sincerity brand via ensuring “new in town,”honesty and cheerfulness. The Wyndham branch creates Howard Johnson hotel as a sincerity brand through ensuring authentic and originality when Howard Johnson and his son exhibit on their mission to create cosy, budget-friendly and friendly hotels with unmatched smoothnesses that would subserve both business travelers and vacationers alike. Hilton, Marriot, InterContinental and Accor branches created entertainment hotel brands through selling “discovery” and “exploration” adventure (Tran, et al. 2013). The excitement hotel brands such as Autograph Collection established by Marriott, Double Tree established by Hilton, Mercure established by Accor, and Candlewood established by InterContinental show the accommodation establishments with phantasy and contemporary.

### **Brand Personality in Tourism and Hospitality Literature**

As indicated previously, researchers in the tourism and hospitality sector have made efforts to implement the concept of brand personality as well. However, more efforts have been taken in performing this notion to tourism destinations (Ekinci and Hosany, 2006; Ekinci et al. 2007; Murphy et al. 2007a, Murphy et al. 2007b; Prayag, 2007; Yuksel and Bilim, 2009) and restaurants (Siguaw et al. 1999; Austin et al. 2003; Kim et al. 2011), while little research has unearthed the notion in the lodging industry, except for a few (Lee and Back, 2010; Tran et al. 2013). Tran et al. (2013) have a bash to discover the relationship between accommodation

establishment brand quality and accommodation establishment brand personality in order to provide an effective way for hotel brand managers to improve their brand loyalty and value. Using canonical correlation analysis, their study shows that the five factors of hotel brand quality construct (tangible, assurance, reliability, empathy and responsiveness) are remarkably associated with preferences on the five factors of hotel brand personality (competence, sincerity, excitement, sophistication, and ruggedness), respectively. Nevertheless, when performing Aaker's scale, they miscarry to identify the underlying factors by the medium of statistical analysis.

Another research is by Lee and Back (2010) who examined to look into the relationship between brand personality and its antecedents (user imagery, service quality and perceived price) and consequences (brand loyalty and trust) in the upper upscale business accommodation industry. Only two brand personality factors, sophistication and competence come into prominence in their research. This is conceivable because their research concentrate was on the upper upscale business accommodation establishments, and competence and sophistication certainly represent personality of upper upscale business accommodation establishments. Thus, Lee and Back (2010) propose more researches on other hotel segments are essential to take possession the changeable effects of brand personality factors by brand segments. To answer to this request, the existing study desires to perform Aaker's brand personality scale in economy hotel segment.

## METHODOLOGY

In this study, it is aimed to detecting the brand personality of a selected hotel in Çanakkale destination. A study to detect the brand personality of any hotel has not been found before in the tourism literature in Turkey. Therefore, we can say that this study is important for the tourism literature as to brand personality. The data have been collected from shared contents with #hotelname hashtag on Instagram with regard to the selected hotel between 31st October 2013 and 8th August 2019. The universe of the study is all customers who have shared contents about the selected hotel on social media platforms. As for that the sample of the study is 630 customers who have shared contents with #hotelname on Instagram between 31st October 2013 and 8th August 2019. These contents have been examined between 1st August and 21st August 2019.

This research is limited to sharing contents of customers of a hotel selected in Çanakkale via Instagram. That is, the work is limited to only one destination, one hotel's customers and one social media platform. In addition, this research is based on the assumption that brand personalities of accommodation establishments could be detected just like other products.

In the study, the content analysis method, one of the qualitative research methods, have been used for data analysis. As it is known, qualitative research is the research that focuses on understanding and reflecting participants' perspectives on events and situations (Yildirim and Simsek, 2006). It can be said that the content analysis is a technique has been used for understanding and comparing records, discourses or publications. The aim of this method is defining messages and interpretations in documents systematically (Arikan, 2013: 21). Therefore, the content analysis enables to researchers analysis obtained data and this method simplifies the use of data for other stages of studies (Coskun et al., 2015).

In this study, while detecting the brand personality of the selected hotel is taken as reference with Aaker's (1997) the Brand Personality Scale. Themes and subthemes have been determined according to this scale. Then words representing traits of the scale have been coded according to the coding method what has been performed according to predetermined concepts. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), the coding method has been performed according to predetermined concepts is among the forms of data encoding methods.

In the study, 630 contents which shared by customers of the hotel via #hotelname on Instagram have been analyzed. These contents have been evaluated according to 42 traits in the Brand Personality Scale (Aaker, 1997). In addition, each content considered to reflect traits in the scale has been given “one” score by authors. After reviewing all contents, the scores given for each trait have been added by authors. After that a chart which including traits and scores has been created. The arithmetic mean of scores given for traits in the chart has been found as 10,2. Traits which have score of 10 and less are excluded from the chart. Inasmuch as it is assumed that these traits do not reflect the brand personality of the hotel. In the formed chart, traits of 11 scores and over are marked. Afterwards, these traits have been divided into factors with reference to studies in the literature. Thus, brand personality factors of the hotel have tried to be detected.

In this study, internal validity and external validity have been obtained by using expert opinion. Besides internal reliability and external reliability have been carried out by analyzing the data again and finding the same results.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. shows the 42 traits in Aaker's brand personality scale and the scoring for the hotel. When the customers' shares regarding the hotel on Instagram are evaluated, it is seen that the most scores get the “wholesome” and “family-oriented” traits. These traits has been followed by “trendy”, “upper class”, “technical”, “charming”, “exciting”, “friendly” and “sentimental” traits respectively.

**Table 1.** Traits on the Brand Personality Scale and Trait Scores of the Selected Hotel

<b>Trait</b>	<i>Down-to-earth</i>	<i>Family-oriented</i>	<i>Smalltown</i>	<i>Honest</i>	<i>Sincere</i>	<i>Real</i>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Score</b>	5	<b>36</b>	2	4	5	6	58
<b>Trait</b>	<i>Wholesome</i>	<i>Original</i>	<i>Cheerful</i>	<i>Sentimental</i>	<i>Friendly</i>	<i>Daring</i>	+
<b>Score</b>	<b>48</b>	7	4	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	3	91
<b>Trait</b>	<i>Trendy</i>	<i>Exciting</i>	<i>Spirited</i>	<i>Cool</i>	<i>Young</i>	<i>Imaginative</i>	+
<b>Score</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>15</b>	7	4	3	5	59
<b>Trait</b>	<i>Unique</i>	<i>Up-to-date</i>	<i>Independent</i>	<i>Contemporary</i>	<i>Reliable</i>	<i>Hard working</i>	+
<b>Score</b>	6	6	5	7	3	5	32
<b>Trait</b>	<i>Secure</i>	<i>Intelligent</i>	<i>Technical</i>	<i>Corporate</i>	<i>Successful</i>	<i>Leader</i>	+
<b>Score</b>	7	6	<b>20</b>	<b>33</b>	4	6	76
<b>Trait</b>	<i>Confident</i>	<i>Upper class</i>	<i>Glomorous</i>	<i>Good looking</i>	<i>Charming</i>	<i>Feminine</i>	+
<b>Score</b>	10	<b>24</b>	5	9	<b>18</b>	<b>14</b>	80
<b>Trait</b>	<i>Smooth</i>	<i>Outdorsy</i>	<i>Masculine</i>	<i>Western</i>	<i>Tough</i>	<i>Rugged</i>	+
<b>Score</b>	7	6	5	6	6	3	33
<b>Total</b>	Number of traits: 42						432
Arithmetic mean: $432/42 = 10,2$							

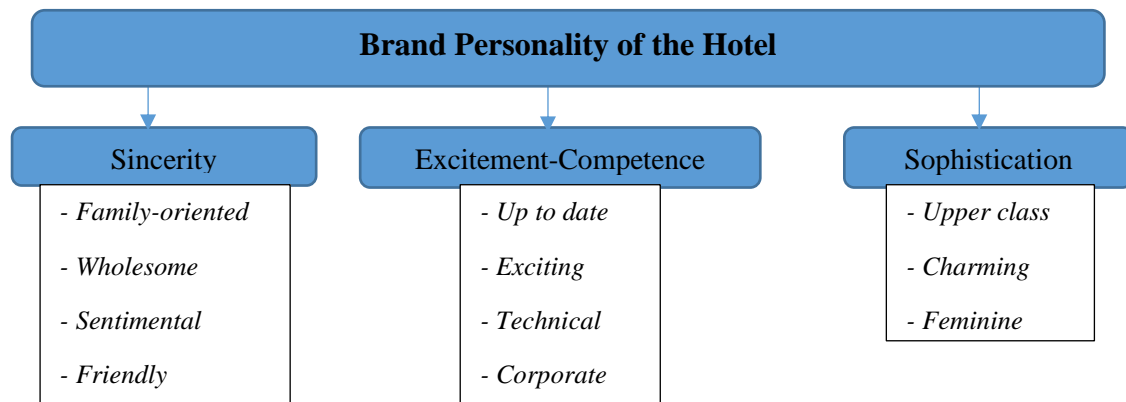
The arithmetic mean of the scores of the traits in the Aaker’s Brand Personality Scale has been calculated by dividing the sum of scores of all traits (432) to total number of traits (42). The arithmetic mean score has been found as 10,2. Traits which above the arithmetic mean score (10,2) are evaluated. Besides factors of brand personality of the hotel has been determined by considering Aaker’s Brand Personality Scale. As a result the factors and traits representing the brand personality of the hotel are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Factors and Traits of the Selected Hotel

Factors	Traits				Factor’s Mean
<b>Sincerity</b>	<i>Family-oriented</i>	<i>Wholesome</i>	<i>Sentimental</i>	<i>Friendly</i>	28,25
	36	48	14	15	
<b>Excitement-competence</b>	<i>Up to date</i>	<i>Exciting</i>	Technical	Corporate	23,25
	25	15	20	33	
<b>Sophistication</b>	<i>Upper class</i>	<i>Charming</i>	Feminine		18,33
	23	18	14		

In this study, it has been detected that the brand personality of the hotel consists of three factors and eleven traits. Factors and traits that make up the brand personality of the hotel are shown in Figure 1. “Sincerity” factor which consist of four traits is the highest mean in the brand personality of the hotel. As for “sophistication” factor consist of three traits is the lowest mean factor in the brand personality of the hotel.

**Figure 1.** Brand Personality of the Hotel



Factors which are revealed in detecting the brand personality of the hotel have been named with reference to Aaker’s Brand Personality Scale (1997). Family-oriented, wholesome, sentimental and friendly traits take part “sincerity” factor in the scale of Aaker. Traits of first factor of the hotel's brand personality is the same in Aaker's study. Thus this factor has been termed “sincerity” in this study. Tran et al. (2013) also has detected that “sincerity” factor of Aaker's scale reflects the brand personality of accommodation establishments in the tourism sector. It is known that the selected hotel for this study is a hotel which provides services apart from accommodation. For this reason, this accommodation establishment is accessible by the public easily. This may explain the fact that the same factor is prominent in both studies.

On the other hand up to date, exciting, technical and corporate traits take part “excitement” and “competence” factors in the scale of Aaker (1997). Therefore, this factor has been termed “excitement-competence”. Tran et al. (2013) also has detected that “excitement” factor of Aaker's scale reflects the brand personality of accommodation establishments in the tourism

sector. It is known that the selected hotel for this study is a hotel which provides sportive services to customers such as tennis, swimming, football and fitness training. Thus, it can be said that the hotel electrify to its customers. This may explain the fact that the same factor is prominent in both studies. In addition to this, Lee and Back (2010) also has detected that “competence” factor of Aaker's scale reflects the brand personality of the leading hotel chains in the tourism sector. It is known that the selected hotel for this study is one of the most popular hotels in the destination. This may explain the fact that the same factor is prominent in both studies.

In other respects upper class, charming and feminine traits take part “sophistication” factor in the scale of Aaker. Traits of third factor of the hotel’s brand personality is the same in Aaker’s study. Hence this factor has been termed “sophistication” in this study. Lee and Back (2010) also has detected that “sophistication” factor of Aaker's scale reflects the brand personality of the leading hotel chains in the tourism sector. It is known that the selected hotel for this study is one of the most expensive hotels in the destination. This may explain the fact that the same factor is prominent in both studies.

While determining the brand personality of the hotel, coding technique has been used to reveal the numerical scores of the traits in Table 2. Words and Word groups which seen in Table 3. have been used for achieving the numerical scores of personality traits in Table 2. In shared contents have been examined, each word in Table 3 has been given the score “1” for personality traits in the same line. Thus scores which showing in Table 2. to personality factor and traits of the hotel have been detected.

**Table 3.** Personality Factors and Traits of the Selected Hotel and Expressions that Reflecting these Traits

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Traits</b>	<b>Expressions</b>
<b>Sincerity</b>	Family-oriented	Wedding, kids academy, family, happy kids, wedding night, bride, groom, anniversary, honeymoon, kids, good family, family therapy etc.
	Wholesome	Yoga, pilates, tennis, fitness, swimming, therapies, massages, healthy life, positive energy, bodybuilding etc.
	Sentimental	Happy kids, growing up with sports, happy beginnings, cute kids, honeymoon, anniversary, cute animals etc.
	Friendly	Friends, associates, meeting of friends, wellcome, kind, come again, happy holidays etc.
<b>Excitement-Competence</b>	Up-to-date	Popular band, elite group, nice couple, fashion, yoga party, party people etc.
	Exciting	Awesome, interesting, bellydance, best of the day, sunrise, sunset, lovely view, a happy memory, enjoy the underwater etc.
	Technical	Pool, swim cap, kitchen, front desk, sauna, Turkish bath, fitness center. wedding-ceremony hall, cook etc.
	Corporate	Business, meeting, employees, meeting group, meeting room, organisation etc.
<b>Sophistication</b>	Upper Class	Popular band, elite, relaxing, concerts, awesome view, bosphorus, actress, festivity, part etc.
	Charming	Happy kids, kids, gracious, darling, pretty, sweet couple etc.
	Feminine	Coiffeur, nails, matinee for ladies, bellydancer, women etc.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this study, it has been detected that the brand personality of the selected hotel for study consists of three factors. These factors are; “sincerity”, “excitement-competence” and “sophistication”. It has been found that the trait which has the highest score in the “sincerity”

factor is “wholesome” and the trait which has the highest score in the “excitement-competence” factor is “corporate“. As for that the trait which has the highest score in the “sophistication” factor is “upper class“. Therefore, it has founded that best traits which describe of three factors of the hotel's brand personality has “wholesome”, “corporate“ and “upper class” respectively.

In the study, it has been detected which “sincerity” factor has the highest mean among the brand personality factors of the hotel. Accordingly, it is seen that the “sincerity” factor which reflects the best of brand personality of the hotel. Thus, it has been found that the hotel is perceived as a sincere hotel by customers’ shared contents on Instagram. The highlight of the hotel with its sincere personality could be attributed to providing customer satisfaction-oriented service.

On the other hand, in the study, it has been detected which “sophistication” factor has the lowest mean among the brand personality factors of the hotel. Thus, it is seen that the “sophistication” factor which reflects the least of brand personality of the hotel in customers’ perceptions. This situation, could be attributed to organizing many public organizations at the hotel. The highlight of the hotel with its sincere personality could be attributed to providing customer satisfaction-oriented service. So we can recommend to hotel managements should carry out sincerity themed practices. In addition, these applications should be used in the marketing communication via social media. In this study, the most important trait of the sincerity factor has been found as “wholesome”. Therefore, managements of hotels with health tourism concept, should share contents which includes spa services, massage services, fitness training or other sports trainings on social media pages.

With the revealing personality traits in this study, the selected hotel for study could become more concrete in the minds of the customers. Thus, the products of this hotel be able to market with revealing personality traits easily. In addition, it could be said that this study is a guide for marketers in terms of revealing personalities of other accommodation establishments. Thus, the brand personality of other accommodation establishments can be identified and embodied in the perceptions of customers. This could facilitate the marketing of their products by marketers. When the literature is examined, it is seen that Austin et al., (2003), Kim et al., (2011) and Siguaw et al., (1999) have conducted brand personality studies on restaurant establishments. Lee and Back, (2010) and Tran et al. (2013) also have conducted studies to detecting the brand personality of hotels in their previous studies. However, there has not carried out any research to detecting the brand personality of whatsoever accommodation establishment in Turkey. Therefore, this study could contribute to marketing literature in Turkey.

One of the results has been revealed in this study is that the brand personality of whatsoever accommodation establishment could be detected through social media. With this result, it could be said that accommodation marketers should pay more attention to social media. Inasmuch as it is seen that almost everyone has a social media account in this age. Therefore, it could be said that marketers who can use social media effectively could be more successful than their competitors. A marketer who could analyze contents has been shared by customers on social media. Thus, this marketer could market hotel products by considering comments on social media more easily. Besides this marketer can use some methods according to the demands of the customers. For example, tourism marketers can identify to customers who care about sensory factors. In this way, they can market the hotel's products to this customer group through sharing contents which address sensory perceptions such as golden sandy beaches, wave sounds from the sea and pure iodine smells on social media.

With the results of this study, some suggestions can be presented both for accommodation marketers and researchers. In this study, the recommendations are developed for accommodation marketers are listed as follows:

- Accommodation marketers should review the comments have been written with regard to their establishments on social media.
- Accommodation marketers should draw certain conclusions from the social media comments they have reviewed. Besides they should carry out their actions based on these results.
- Accommodation marketers should detect the brand personality of hotels. They can embody tourist products in the minds of customers through brand personality traits. Thus, they can gain competitive advantage among their competitors. For example, the products of a hotel establishment whose brand personality is detected as “family-oriented” can be marketed with this slogan: Since we are a family-oriented hotel, you can choose us and give your children unprecedented and funny experiences!
- Ultimately, if personality traits of the destination where hotel is located, is detected, accommodation marketers should market their products in accordance with the destination's personality traits.

With the results of this study, some suggestions can be presented for the researchers. These suggestions can be listed as follows:

- Researchers should conduct more studies to detecting the brand personality of accommodation establishments. As in this study, they should detect the brand personality of accommodation establishments in other destinations.
- Researchers should be compared after detecting the brand personalities of accommodation establishments which have different star status in the same destination. Thus, it can be examined whether the personality of the hotels with different star status differ according to the number of stars.
- Researchers, could diversify the literature on brand personality by detecting the brand personality of food and beverage establishments, travel establishments or other tourism establishments like accommodation establishments.
- Researchers should review all tourism-related studies in destinations where brand personality studies are carried out. In addition, they should compare personality traits which are revealed in these studies.

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