



Brand Personalities of Video Game Consoles

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ABSTRACT: As consumers play video game consoles, they become more engaged with the product and formulate a relationship with it. From this, perceived brand personality traits may manifest among consumers. This study investigates how consumers perceive video game console brand personalities. Although previous studies have looked at media brand personalities in television channels and newspapers, none have applied Aaker's Brand Personality Scale Dimensions (1997) towards video game consoles. The seventh generation of video game consoles was selected, since it has recently ended with the advent of the eighth generation of video game consoles. The video game consoles examined include Nintendo's Wii, Microsoft's Xbox 360 and Sony's PlayStation 3. A convenience sample of undergraduate students at a large southeastern university was selected, and principal component factor analyses were conducted for each video game brand personality, as well as a composite factor analysis to look at overall consumer perceptions of video game brand personalities across all three seventh generation video game consoles.

KEYWORDS: Brand management, video games, media management, video game business, audience analysis, brand personality.

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Today, roughly 56% of all households in the United States own at least one seventh generation video game console (Nielsen, 2012). During the last decade, amid innovations in graphics, methods of engagement, and alternative entertainment options, the competition among the three mainstream video game console companies (Nintendo, Sony, and Microsoft) has become even fiercer. With every new generation of video game consoles, defined as non-portable video game play devices that rely on a television screen, these companies have introduced unique graphics, methods of playing video games as well as user abilities to access other modes of entertainment such as film, television, or the Internet. When consumers interact with video game consoles, they realize certain attributes or characteristics of a video game console by either playing video games or interacting with other features on a video game console. These experiences can influence consumers' video game console brand personality perceptions, or the particular personal adjectives that consumers ascribe toward video game consoles. This study examines consumers' video game console brand personality perceptions.

Previous studies have not directly explored consumers' video game console brand personality perceptions. Lin (2010) found that outgoing video game consumers were likely to be drawn to excitement, competence and sincerity brand personalities in video games and toys. However, this study used BANDAI brand hand-held video games, which are portable and significantly different from video game consoles. Moreover, the concept of media brand personalities has been explored in television channel brands (Chan-Olmsted & Cha, 2007) and newspaper brands (Kim, Baek, & Martin, 2010). Differently, video game consoles are an interactive media that engender different relationships with consumers.

As the top three mainstream video game console companies, Nintendo, Microsoft, and Sony have all introduced new eighth generation video game consoles into the marketplace (Wii U, Xbox One and PlayStation 4, respectively)(Totilo, 2013), this presents a unique opportunity to specifically analyze the brand personalities of the previous (seventh) generation's three top selling video game consoles: Nintendo's Wii, Microsoft's Xbox 360 and Sony's PlayStation 3 (Benedetti, 2012; Chen & Streitfeld, 2013; Smith, 2012). The Wii was introduced in 2006, the Xbox 360 was introduced in 2005 and the PlayStation 3 was introduced in 2006 ("ABC News," 2005; Morris, 2006; Schiesel, 2006a). Therefore, consumers have had an opportunity to become acquainted with seventh generation video game consoles from their introduction and peak in the video game marketplace, beginning in 2005 to until 2012, when the Wii U was introduced and ushered in the eighth generation of video game consoles (Wingfield, 2012). As a result, consumers should be highly familiar with the seventh generation video game consoles and be able to divulge their own perceptions of the seventh generation video game consoles' brand personalities.

The aim of this study is to create brand personality scales that are representative of each video game console in the seventh generation. In order to extract consumers' perceived video game console brand personality adjectives, a principal component factor analysis was performed for each video game console. This study furthers the current academic literature stream regarding video game marketing and use of brand personalities. For the industry, it will help inform practitioners of consumers' perceptions of seventh generation video game consoles brand personalities. The creation of brand personality scales may serve as a metric of brand health for a parent video game

console brand, for instance comparing how consumers who interact with certain video game consoles under the parent brand (i.e. The Nintendo Wii contrasted against the Nintendo Wii U) perceive the parent brand (Nintendo) or against other video game console parent brands (i.e. Sony and Microsoft). This may influence how video game console firms position future installments of video game console lines and introduce new elements and functionalities through them.

Over the past forty-five years, video games have evolved from a sub-section of the toy industry that targeted children into a separate media industry which appeals to all types of demographics (“No Longer Kids Stuff,” 2013; “Time,” 2013). As previously stated, roughly 56% of all households in the United States own at least one seventh generation video game console, and 65% of those consoles are located in the living room (Nielsen, 2012). The average video game consumer is roughly thirty years old and has been playing video games for over a decade (“Entertainment Software Association,” 2013). In the United States, consumers have spent over \$24 billion on video games, hardware and accessories in 2011 (“Entertainment Software Association,” 2012b). Video game play has also been maintained as a social activity, as 62% of video game players play video games with their friends in either a physical space or through online portals (“Entertainment Software Association,” 2012b).

There is intense competition and product differentiation within the video game console industry. Based on North American sales of the seventh generation video game consoles in December 2013, the Wii had a 38.3% market share (45.03 million Wii video game consoles sold), the Xbox 360 had a 38.3% market share (44.96 million Xbox 360 video game consoles sold), and the PlayStation 3 had a 23.4% market share (27.53 million Play Station 3 video game consoles sold) (“VGChartz,” 2013d). Moreover, Nintendo has recently allowed for Dish and Comcast subscribers to stream live television through its Wii U console (Gilbert, 2012). Microsoft has been able to add entertainment options to its Xbox Live service, including access to the ESPN channel and HBO GO service (Ewalt, 2012). Sony has incorporated a Blu-ray disc player into the Play Station 3 and 4 as well as, up until recently, allowed consumers free access to its Internet service (Greenwald, 2012; Sullentrop & Totilo, 2013). Not only are these media consumption options points of differentiation among these video game console brands, but they also serve as points of differentiation against other entertainment, media devices, and services.

Branding

The study of brands has become widely embraced by marketers as an attempt to understand and measure consumer interest, relationships, perceptions and attitudes toward products and services (Biel & Aaker, 1993). Branding of any kind allows marketers to create differences and associations amongst products and services. Consequentially, consumers are able to make quicker purchasing decisions and cultivate relationships with certain branded products and services (Fournier, 1998; Keller & Sood, 2003). Not only must video game console brands differentiate amongst themselves, but also against console brands under the same parent company, i.e. the eighth generation Wii U must also create distance between itself and previous older console brands, i.e. the Wii (Snow, 2012). This strategy is imperative since innovation is a key element in the video game console marketplace. As a result, the seventh generation of video game consoles may be examined in a vacuum, as upon market introduction and throughout the

entire seventh generation, each video game console from each video game company was the latest in video game console technology (Totilo, 2013).

Brand personalities are often constructed and reliant upon consumers who have had long-standing engagements with brands. According to Fournier (1998), the theory of brand relationship posits that consumers build relationships with brands, and, although they recognize it is imaginary in context, map out and describe these relationships using human relationship descriptors, such as possessing a friendship or marriage with a brand. There is a feedback loop between the development of brand relationships and fostering brand personality perceptions (Fournier, 1998). Doyle (1990) found that it is necessary to create distinct brand personalities so that consumers may have a stronger relationship to them.

Consumers have long held a propensity for ascribing human characteristics or traits to inanimate objects. This proclivity has served as the forerunner for the study of brand personalities, which may be traced back to studies dealing with personality psychology (Hogan, 1998; Kassarian, 1971). Several studies have demonstrated that consumers assign personality traits to product and commercial brands (Aaker, 1997; Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello, 2009; Sung and Tinkham, 2005). Aaker (1997) defines brand personalities as “the set of human characteristics associated with a brand.” Aaker (1997) found that brand personalities fall into five main categories: (1) sincerity, (2) excitement, (3) competence, (4) sophistication and (5) ruggedness. Unique brand personalities can help foster relationships between consumers and brands. Consumers have predilections toward brands that match their perceived self-image (Govers & Schoormans, 2005; Lin, 2010). As a result, brands may be used as self-symbols or for self-expression (Keller, 1993). Brand personality perceptions may also be influenced by consumer gender (Levy, 1999). The recognition of a brand personality in a product has been found to increase consumer loyalty, help differentiate between products, as well as coax active reception of information within consumers (Aaker, 1992; Biel, 1992; Fournier, 1998). Hence, if consumers do in fact use video game consoles for an extended period of time, it is likely that they foster perceived brand personalities toward them.

RQ1: What are the perceived brand personality traits of the Wii?

RQ2: What are the perceived brand personality traits of the Xbox 360?

RQ3: What are the perceived brand personality traits of the PlayStation 3?

RQ4: Across all three seventh generation video game consoles, what are the aggregate video game console brand personality traits?

Gender

Predominantly, males invest significant time playing video games, but this trend is quickly changing. In the past, numerous studies found that males typically played video games more frequently than females played video games (Greenberg et. al., 2008; Lucas & Sherry, 2004; Ogletree & Drake, 2007; Sherry & Lucas, 2003). However, recent studies have indicated that perhaps this discrepancy is dwindling, as more females are active and consistent participants in video game play, especially in online gaming

(Williams, Yee, & Caplan, 2008). According to a survey by the Entertainment Software Association (2012a), nearly 47% of video game players are female. The vast proportion of video games often include elements such as direct competition, role definitions and ostensibly clear goals, which all typically appeal to males (Lucas & Sherry, 2004). Males prefer physically oriented video games as opposed to females, who prefer more thought-provoking video games (Greenberg et al., 2008).

Males may be more interested in playing video games due to the sexual nature and presentation within some video games. For instance, video games may impress upon female video game players to take up male gender roles during video game play (Walkerdine, 2004). Furthermore, male video game characters have been found to be crucial to plotlines and are often casted as heroes, while female characters may serve as sexy, innocent, and supplemental characters (Dietz, 1998; Ivory, 2006; Miller & Summers, 2007). The amount of gameplay among females may also be influenced by how females perceive other females' actual playing time (Cruea & Park, 2012). Since this is a relatively new trend, it remains unknown as to whether or not female perceptions and relationships with video game console brands will be similar to those of males.

Gender may impact brand personality perceptions since males and females play video games differently. It has been found that males may be more brand conscious than females (Nair & Mohandas, 2012) though another study found that females are more sensitive to brands than males (Guest, 1964). Male video game players are spurred by challenges and enjoy playing video games in teams in comparison to female video game players (Eglesz, Feteke, Kiss, & Izzo, 2005). One study found that females were not as motivated to play video games as males were because rewards such as sense of accomplishment in completing a level did not appeal to them (Hamlen, 2010). Still, regardless of gender, those who play video games often became more involved and emotionally tied toward them (Eglesz, Feteke, Kiss, & Izzo, 2005).

RQ5: Is there a difference in video game console brand personality traits between males and females?

Genres of Video Games

On the face of the video game industry, there are prevalent video game genres played on each video game console brand. While many video games are cross-platform, it does not mean that sales of each video game are equal across video game consoles. For instance, while video games from the *Halo* series are available on the Wii, there are significantly more video games from this series sold for the Xbox 360. Nintendo has been associated with the *Super Mario Brothers* series since its inception in 1985 (Totilo, 2012). The series has sold over five hundred million units worldwide, positioning itself as one of the best-selling video game series of all time (D'Angelo, 2012). Additionally, with other popular series such as *Zelda* and *Donkey Kong*, Nintendo has placed itself as an entertainment brand that offers video games that are light-hearted, funny, and fun to play. Hence, the genres most associated with Nintendo, at least in terms of overall sales, are platform and adventure ("VGChartz," 2013e).

The advent of the Wii has allowed Nintendo to embrace its familiar stable of characters, but also expand into sports, fitness and racing games, which are generally perceived as less complicated to play than other video game genres ("Digital Trends

Staff,” 2012; “VGChartz,” 2013b). Allowing users to use their bodies as part of the video game play experience, the Wii console was able to introduce new types of video games as well as reinvent old, familiar series. Five of the top ten best-selling video games are exclusive Wii brand sports or fitness titles, while three are from the familiar *Super Mario Brothers* series (“VGChartz,” 2013b). As a result, the Wii has earned success as a video game console perceived for casual gaming, as its video games are easy-to-learn and fun to play (Gaudiosi, 2013).

Microsoft has long tried to position itself as a destination for hardcore gamers, or those who seek tough-to-play and highly-competitive video games. These video game players typically seek a variety of shooting and action genre video games (Deleon, 2010). This has continued with the Xbox 360. Its best-selling video games include the *Call of Duty* series, which has collectively sold over forty million copies in North America (“VGChartz,” 2013c). Among the top ten best-selling video games for the Xbox 360, eight of them are of the shooter genre (“VGChartz,” 2013c). Due to the popularity of its line of available complex and competitive shooting video games, the Xbox 360 has become a highly favored video game console brand among hardcore gamers (“GameSpy Staff,” 2009). Today, the Xbox 360 has continued to maintain its relationship with hardcore gamers while slowly expanding out to casual gamers with mixed results (Howson, 2008).

Sony has positioned the PlayStation 3 as an alternative video game console for hardcore gamers disinterested in the Xbox 360 video game console. Historically, Sony’s PlayStation video game console series has become associated with racing and role-playing video games, such as the *Gran Turismo*, *Metal Gear Solid*, *Grand Theft Auto* as well as the *Final Fantasy* series (“VG Chartz,” 2013f; 2013g). Over time, however, Sony lost the exclusive rights to the *Final Fantasy* and *Grand Theft Auto* series among others, diluting its connection to certain video game franchises and eroding its perceived image among gamers (Schiesel, 2006b; Schiesel, 2012). Six of the top ten best-selling video games, including the top four, for the PlayStation 3 are all from the *Call of Duty* series (“VGChartz,” 2013a). Hence, PlayStation 3 still retains favor with hardcore gamers, though it is not as strong as it once was during the early 2000s (Osborn, 2012). Thus, video game genres may affect the perception of video game console brand personalities, since genre affects the overall video game experience of the video game player as well as predilections to playing particular video games.

RQ6: Are the video game console brand personality scales similar to the most popular video game genres played on the video game consoles?

Method

In order to collect information regarding how people perceived the brand personalities of the Wii, Xbox 360, and PS3 video game consoles, it was necessary to first collate a list of adjectives that consumers would most likely use to describe these products. The free association technique was used because it is an unstructured, qualitative method in which top-of-mind thoughts and phrases about a particular product or service may be extracted from consumers (Aaker, 1991). It has been suggested that the free association technique may allow for unfettered discussion and allow participants to express latent attitudes that may not manifest through other research methods (Aaker, 1991).

An undergraduate class was visited at a large southeastern university. The researcher introduced himself and asked students what thoughts and feelings came to mind when he mentioned each of the three seventh generation video game consoles to them. Students were given ten minutes to list up to ten items on a sheet of paper per video game console. After this information was collated, a survey instrument was crafted for a pretest that incorporated many of the descriptions mentioned by the students (which will be defined later on). The top twenty personality traits were selected for the final survey. However, only fifteen items (e.g., classic, ahead-of-the-curve, nerdy, and fantasy) were added to the original forty-two personality traits list that comprise Aaker's (1997) brand personality scales, as words from the free association list (e.g. daring, trendy, honest, imaginative, and sincere) overlapped with Aaker's (1997) brand personality scales.

A pilot study using a survey method was conducted to test the composite list of brand personalities. Participants were asked to what extent each brand personality trait explained each video game console brand. Based on a study by Chan-Olmsted and Cha (2007) which looked at network news brand personality traits, brand personality traits with a mean above 3.0 and standard deviation above 0.2 across all three video game consoles were kept in the final questionnaire. A total of twenty-one brand personality traits were used in the final questionnaire (see Appendix A). Two of Aaker's (1997) brand personality dimensions, sincerity and ruggedness, did not offer any brand personality traits that participants felt were highly reflective of video game console brand personalities. The brand personality traits young and youthful, despite possessing similar meanings, were kept in the study, as young refers to a particular stage in life while youthful connotes appearing young or possessing energy.

To collect data, an online survey was sent out to a convenience sample of undergraduate students at a large southeastern university. Participants were emailed a survey link and offered the opportunity to take a survey about perceptions of video game consoles. They were instructed that, by taking the online survey, there was no incentive provided from the researcher, but for extra credit if their professors offered it to their own classes. A total of five hundred and ninety-six participants took the survey, and four hundred and ninety-three (83%) of participants completed it. Participants were eliminated in the data-cleaning process if they left any answers blank or completed the survey in less than five minutes, as roughly 50% of participants finished the survey in under five minutes. The questionnaire asked for ninety-two responses from participants (sixty-three of them based on the final list of twenty-one brand personality traits), and it was believed that the survey would take at least five minutes to meticulously complete. After data-cleaning, two-hundred and ninety-eight participants were left for data analysis.

Measurements

To measure the perceptions of brand personalities of video game consoles, Aaker's (1997) brand personality scales were used. The study found that brand personalities fall into five main categories: (1) sincerity, (2) excitement, (3) competence, (4) sophistication and (5) ruggedness. Additionally, Aaker's (1997) original brand personality scales looked at U.S. brands, and, while Sony and Nintendo are not American, they are widely known throughout the United States. Participants were asked to what degree each offered

brand personality trait described each video game console. This measurement employed a five point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (not descriptive) to 5 (very descriptive).

To measure gender, a simple nominal question at the end of the survey instrument was used to maintain the proportions of males and females who completed the survey. Additional demographic questions were asked regarding major, ethnicity and household income.

Statistical Analysis

Several principal component factor analyses and one one-way ANOVA were performed. In order to reduce the amount of high factor loadings and simplify the factor matrix, a varimax rotation was selected for all principal component factor analyses (Hair Jr., Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). First, principal component factor analyses using a varimax rotation were conducted separately for each of the video game consoles. This was executed to extract video game console-specific brand personality scales. Additionally, a composite variate video game brand personality scale was created that consisted of scores all of brand personalities across all of the video game consoles. A one-way ANOVA was used to test differences between males' and females' perceptions of video game console brand personalities across all three consoles (composite variate scale).

Results

As stated, two-hundred ninety-eight participants were analyzed in this study. There were one-hundred sixteen males (38.9%) and one-hundred eighty-two females (61.1%). Roughly 68.5% of the participants identified as Caucasian, followed by Latino/Hispanic (16.8%), Asian (5.4%), African-American (5.0%), other (3.4%) and Pacific Islander (1.0%). 27% of the participants were from annual household incomes of \$150,000 and up, while another 27% of the participants were from annual household incomes of \$80,000 to \$109,000. Meanwhile, 46% of participants were from annual household incomes of less than \$79,999.

This study was interested in exploring the perceived brand personalities of the three mainstream video game console brands. A principal component factor analysis using a varimax rotation was used to identify the brand personality dimensions for each video game console as well as the composite means for brand personalities across all video game consoles. Bartlett's test of sphericity was performed to assess each principal component factor analysis. The results of Bartlett's test of sphericity demonstrated that all of the principle component factor analyses were significant ($p < .001$). In order to identify significant factor loadings, a threshold of .35 and above was used based on the sample population (Hair Jr., Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). However, scales were built from factor analysis components if there were five loading items above the .50 threshold (Costello & Osborne, 2005). In the initial processes of all of the principal component factor analyses, brand personality traits were omitted based on the criterion of deleting indicators that have high loadings across factor components (Costello & Osborne, 2005). During the Xbox 360 principal component factor analysis, intelligent was thrown out. During the PlayStation 3 principal component factor analysis, imaginative, original and unique were thrown out. Lastly, during the composite principal component factor analysis, sleek, cool, unique and imaginative were thrown out. The

results of the principal component factor analyses for the video game consoles were unique. All reliabilities were acceptable with Cronbach's alphas ranging from .85 to .91 (see Appendix B-E).

The first four research questions were interested in individual video game console brand personalities as well as a composite video game console brand personality scale. Factor 1 (Futuristic) for the Wii principal component factor analysis had an eigenvalue of 8.64 and explained 41.16% of the common variance (see Appendix B). It was comprised of brand personality traits such as sleek, cool, up-to-date, exciting and ahead-of-the-curve. This factor contained three brand personality traits from Aaker's (1997) excitement brand personality dimension. The brand personality traits sleek and ahead-of-the-curve were taken from the video game console-specific characterizations dimension.

Factor 1 (Strategic) for the Xbox 360 principal component factor analysis had an eigenvalue of 10.04 and explained 50.20% of the common variance (see Appendix C). It was comprised of brand personality traits such as confident, successful, (a) leader, corporate and contemporary. This factor contained four brand personality traits from Aaker's (1997) competence brand personality dimension. The brand personality trait contemporary is found in Aaker's (1997) excitement brand personality dimension. Factor 2 (Maverick) for the Xbox 360 had an eigenvalue of 1.82 and explained 9.09% of the common variance. It was comprised of brand personality traits such as unique, original, imaginative, independent and ahead-of-the-curve. This factor contained three brand personality traits from Aaker's (1997) excitement brand personality dimension. One brand personality trait, original, is from Aaker's (1997) sophistication brand personality dimension and the other, ahead-of-the-curve, is from the video game console-specific characterizations.

Factor 1 (Progressive) for the PlayStation 3 principal component factor analysis had an eigenvalue of 10.19 and explained 56.63% of the common variance (see Appendix D). It was comprised of brand personality traits such as up-to-date, intelligent, confident, (a) leader and upper-class. This factor contained three brand personality traits from Aaker's (1997) competence brand personality dimension. One brand personality trait, up-to-date, is from Aaker's (1997) excitement brand personality dimension, and upper-class is from Aaker's (1997) sophistication brand personality dimension.

Factor 1 (Advanced) for the composite video game console principal component factor analysis had an eigenvalue of 9.24 and explained 54.32% of the common variance (see Appendix E). It was comprised of brand personality traits such as confident, intelligent, (a) leader, independent and upper-class. This factor contained four brand personality traits from Aaker's (1997) competence brand personality dimension. The upper-class brand personality trait is from Aaker's (1997) sophistication brand personality dimension.

Research questions five and six were interested in differences in video game console brand personality perceptions based on the gender of consumers and how popular video game genres were linked to video game console brand personalities. A one-way ANOVA was performed to compare the variance between male and female groups toward the composite video game console brand personality scale, but it was not statistically significant. A comparison of the video game console brand personality scales and popular video game genres are elaborated upon in the discussion section.

Discussion

This study sought to explore how consumers perceived video game console brand personality traits and tested the seventh generation video game consoles. It is logical that across all of the video game console brands, competence was the most prevalent brand personality dimension. Consumers rely on video game consoles to be competent, since video game consoles must appear as capable to access different types of media or successfully play different types of video games. Additionally, the excitement brand personality dimension was also prevalent among participants. This furthers the notion that consumers do have pre-constructed perceptions of brand personalities of video game consoles (Aaker, 1997).

It appears as though each video game console has a different brand personality dimension. The Wii's brand personality scale was labeled as futuristic, as it was comprised of brand personality traits such as sleek, cool, up-to-date, exciting, and ahead-of-the-curve. This corroborates the Wii's general image among consumers, as it was viewed as a revolutionary console that introduced the notion of humans using their bodies as video game controllers while playing a video game through a video game console, which was largely embraced by the public (Alpeyev & Amano, 2015; Ewalt, 2006).

The Xbox 360 had two brand personality scales. The first brand personality scale was labeled as strategic and was comprised of brand personality traits such as confident, successful, (a) leader, corporate, and contemporary. The second brand personality scale was labeled as maverick and was comprised of brand personality traits such as unique, original, imaginative, independent, and ahead-of-the-curve. These brand personalities are pragmatic descriptions of the Xbox 360, as Microsoft was able to first introduce player achievements, a downloadable video game marketplace and high-definition graphics on a video game console (which happened to be through the Xbox 360) along with other media platform options such as live-streaming certain television channels (Clark, 2010; Sullentrop & Totilo, 2013).

The PlayStation 3's sole brand personality scale, progressive, was comprised of brand personality traits such as up-to-date, intelligent, confident, (a) leader, and upper-class. This does follow, as out of the three video game consoles, PlayStation 3 owners tend to be the oldest and, conceivably, could be perceived as upper-class by other consumers (Nielsen, 2009). Lastly, it follows that, across all video game consoles, consumers would perceive the seventh generation of video game consoles as advanced. Aside from the previously mentioned advancements from the Wii and Xbox 360, consumers have come to expect video game consoles to be advanced and lead innovation in traditional and new media platforms. Interestingly, the brand personality traits seen here were closest to the PlayStation 3 video game console, which suggests that consumers may view the PlayStation 3 video game console as possessing the most mainstream, or most desired, video game brand personality traits. Although not accounted for in the survey, the PlayStation 3's built-in Blue-ray player and higher initial price tag likely impacted consumer perceptions of the video game console brand, too.

There may be one explanation for why gender was not found to impact the composite video game brand personality scale. As previously noted, more female gamers have entered into the video game console marketplace. As a result, it is likely that, due to increased game play, they may have similar brand perceptions to males. Female audiences have had an opportunity to engage with the seventh generation of video game

consoles, and, as a result, may have similar perceptions of video game console brand personalities as do males.

The sixth research question considered how the video game console brand personality scales matched up to the most popular video game genres of each video game console. The Wii is known for its platform genre video games, casual gamer audience as well as its introduction of humans serving as controllers. Its futuristic brand personality scale is aligned with predominant Wii genres, which include casual games, sports and platform video games, as these video games offer up-to-date and exciting experiences for video game players. The Xbox 360's strategic and maverick brand personality scales complement the popular shooter genres played on its video game console. Video games such as the *Call of Duty* series require gamers to be strategic and maverick-like, as these games warrant much independent thinking and keen awareness of surroundings on the part of video game players. The PlayStation 3, with top-selling video games from series like *Grand Theft Auto*, *Gran Turismo*, and *Metal Gear Solid*, was found to be up-to-date, intelligent, confident, (a)leader, corporate and contemporary. The aforementioned video games have been heralded for their complex storylines and contemporariness (Hiscott, 2013; IGN, 2013; Meiklehan, 2013).

Finally, understanding consumers perceive a medium has implications not just for brand management, but it also provides a lens for how consumers gain uses and gratifications from media consumption (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974). Although nearly all of the brand personality traits here are positive, what matters are the *types* of traits used to describe video game consoles. Consumers purchase and/or use video game consoles anticipating distinct video game experiences. In understanding brand personality traits of each video game console, media scholars and media marketers can better understand those expectations, as well as how parent video game console company marketing campaigns are resonating with consumers.

Limitations and Future Studies

A convenience sample of undergraduate students at a southeastern university was used, and so the results of this study cannot be generalized to the general public. The findings in this study may only be considered for the seventh generation of video game consoles. It is also possible that participants based their perceptions of the video game consoles on their perceptions of each parent brand name, using that as a metric to evaluate the brand personalities of each video game console. This study did not inquire as to whether or not participants owned video game consoles, as it was concerned with overall brand personality perceptions across all three video game consoles. In light of that, it should be stated that the range and type of available video game software, along with other marketing efforts from video game publishers or video game console companies, also likely impact consumers' brand personality perceptions.

Future studies should consider whether or not perceptions of video game console brand personalities shift in the eighth generation of video game consoles. It is imperative that future researchers further test the relationship between gender and perception of video game console brand personalities. This strategy might provide insight into how males and females engage video game consoles and, therefore, construct individual perceived notions of video game console brand personalities. It would also be beneficial to measure how self-congruency between user personalities and brand personalities may

impact genre preference. Lastly, since Sony and Microsoft are multi-faceted companies that have myriad products and services, future research should attempt to investigate how consumers' exposure to other Sony and Microsoft products may affect their attitudes towards their respective video game consoles.

Conclusion

This study investigated perceptions of video game brand personalities. Aaker's (1997) excitement and competent brand personality dimensions were largely prevalent across all video game brand personality scales. This study furthers the academic literature on media brand marketing. The creation of these brand personality scales may serve as measurements of brand health as a comparison between individual video game consoles and their respective parent brands. If Nintendo agrees with consumers' "futuristic" Will console brand personality perception, it could use this brand personality scale on subsequent console lines as a way to ensure, research, measure and maintain brand perceptions amongst consumers. As stated by Aaker (1997), understanding brand personality traits helps marketers differentiate brands and understand a brand's place in culture. As consumers are apt to use brands to express themselves (Belk, 1988), it is essential for marketers to understand how consumers may view themselves and express themselves through consumption. Understanding consumer perceptions of a particular brand line can help a company attempt to alter or maintain its brand image. It is likely that video game console brand personality perceptions will change with every generation, warranting further and annually updated academic research in this area. For communications scholars, this also helps inform the types of brand personality traits that consumers gravitate toward when selecting video game play as a media consumption option.

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Appendix A

Initially Tested Measures of Video Game Console Personality Dimensions and Corresponding Traits

Brand Personality

Brand Personality Traits

<i>Dimensions</i>	
Competence	Intelligent Technical Leader Confident Corporate Successful
Excitement	Up-to-date Contemporary Exciting Cool Young Independent Imaginative Unique Trendy
Sophistication	Upper-class
Sincerity	Original
Video Game Console- specific characterizations	Youthful Ahead-of-the-curve Fantasy Sleek

Appendix B

Factor Loadings for Principal Component Analysis with Varimax Rotation of Measures of Brand Personalities of Wii Video Game Console*.

	1	2	3	4	5
Factors					
Factor 1: Futuristic ($\alpha=.86$)					
Wii Sleek	.745	.156	.047	.047	-.010
Wii Cool	.724	.270	.246	.101	.205
Wii Up-to-date	.721	.200	.218	.274	.017
Wii Exciting	.649	.311	.295	.102	.263
Wii Ahead-of-the-curve	.645	.323	.102	.115	.236
Eigenvalues	8.64	1.69	1.39	1.10	1.04
% of total variance accounted for	41.16	8.04	6.60	5.23	4.94

*p<.001

Appendix C

Factor Loadings for Principal Component Analysis with Varimax Rotation of Measures of Brand Personalities of XBOX 360 Video Game Console*.

	1	2	3
Factors			
Factor 1: Strategic ($\alpha=.85$)			
XBOX 360 Confident	.807	.251	.091
XBOX 360 Successful	.783	.000	.336
XBOX 360 Leader	.748	.262	.135
XBOX 360 Corporate	.693	.099	-.096
XBOX 360 Contemporary	.631	.450	.110
Factor 2: Maverick ($\alpha=.88$)			
XBOX 360 Unique	.140	.866	.123
XBOX 360 Original	.245	.796	.100
XBOX 360 Imaginative	.176	.760	.400
XBOX 360 Independent	.481	.621	.027
XBOX 360 Ahead-of-the-curve	.422	.598	.357
Eigenvalues	10.04	1.82	1.18
% of total variance accounted for	50.20	9.09	5.88

*p<.001

Appendix D

Factor Loadings for Principal Component Analysis with Varimax Rotation of Measures of Brand Personalities of PlayStation 3 Video Game Console*.

	1	2
Factors		
Factor 1: Progressive:($\alpha=.91$)		
PlayStation 3 Up-to-date	.840	.161
PlayStation 3 Intelligent	.836	.221
PlayStation 3 Confident	.828	.138
PlayStation 3 Leader	.803	.191
PlayStation 3 Upper Class	.788	.023

Eigenvalues	10.19	1.54
% of total variance accounted for	56.63	8.54

*p<.001

Appendix E

Factor Loadings for Principal Component Analysis) with Varimax Rotation of Measures of Brand Personalities of Composite Video Game Consoles*.

	1	2
Factors		
Factor 1: Advanced:($\alpha=.89$)		
Composite Confident	.844	.145
Composite Intelligent	.773	.374
Composite Leader	.773	.214
Composite Independent	.752	.243
Composite Upper Class	.726	.168
Eigenvalues	9.24	1.46
% of total variance accounted for	54.32	8.57

*p<.001

AUTHORS' DETAILS

Anthony Palomba graduated with his Ph.D. in Mass Communication from the College of Journalism and Communication at the University of Florida in December 2015. His area of research is in the consumer behavior, branding and marketing behind video games and, to a lesser extent, film and television. He has previously worked as a legal assistant for entertainment and corporate law firms as well as a professional market researcher at Nielsen and at Ipsos.