

Dimensions of Brand Personality in Germany: The German Brand Personality Scale 'DEMASK-24'

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Background and Theoretical Base

Background of Study: Successful brands account for a large percentage of shareholder value. Non-tangible and symbolic benefits, such as a brand's personality, are becoming increasingly important to create unique brands and differentiate a product from its competitors. The purpose of this research was to explore the factorial structure of the brand personality concept in the German market and to develop a measurement scale suitable for assessing brand personality on the relevant dimensions.

Theoretical Base:

The lexical approach applied to brands as proposed by Aaker (1997), leading to the American Brand Personality Scale (BPS).

The concept of brand personality as defined by Azoulay & Kapferer (2003, p. 153) as "the unique set of human personality traits both applicable and relevant to brands".

Acknowledgment of newer approaches in negative symbolic consumption (e.g., Banister & Hogg, 2004) by also including negatively valenced attributes (which were excluded by Aaker, 1997).

Method

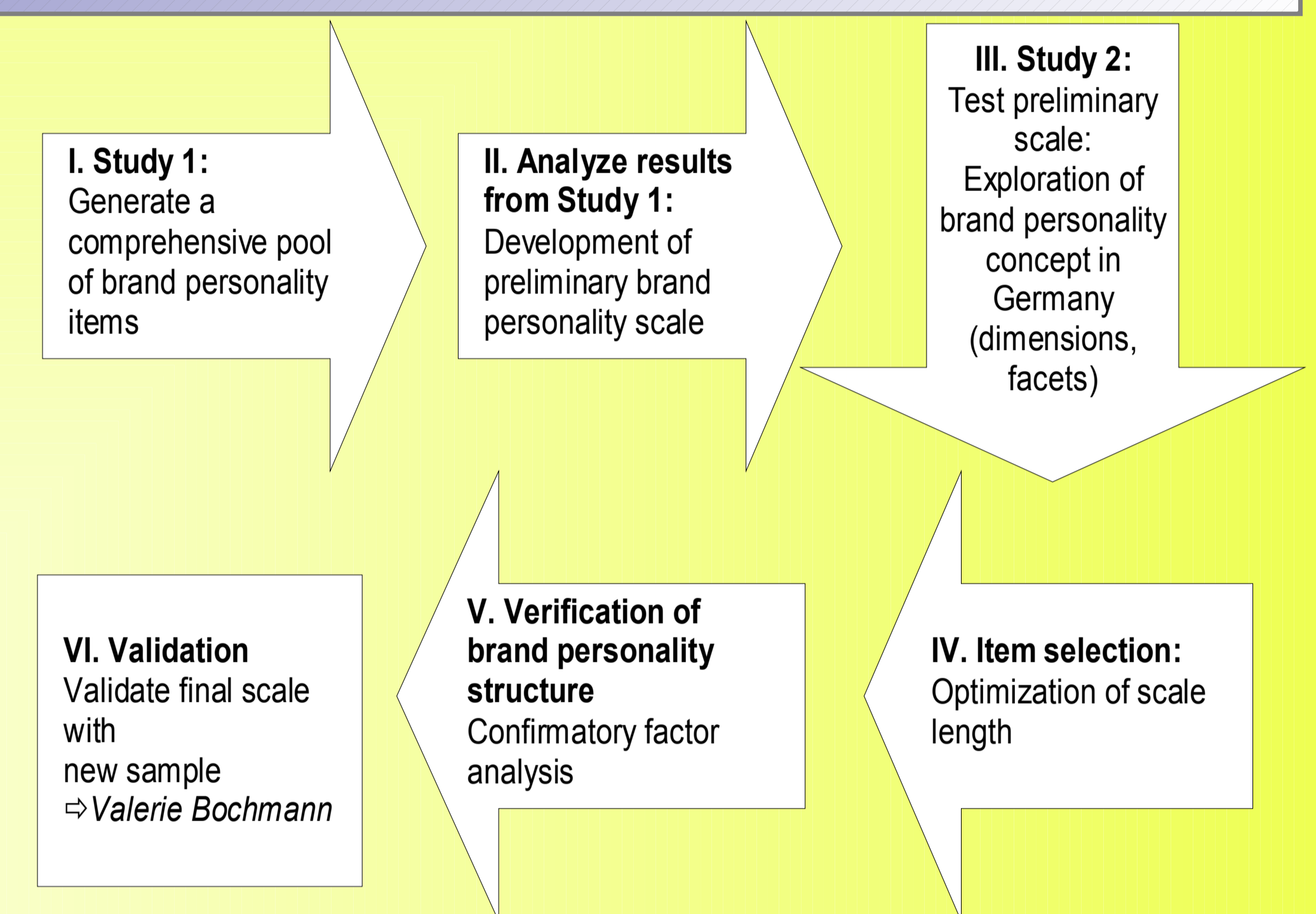
Two consecutive studies were conducted, which were aimed at (1) inductively generating brand personality attributes and at (2) exploring the factorial structure of brand personality attributions in Germany:

Study 1: Brand Personality Attributes Generation

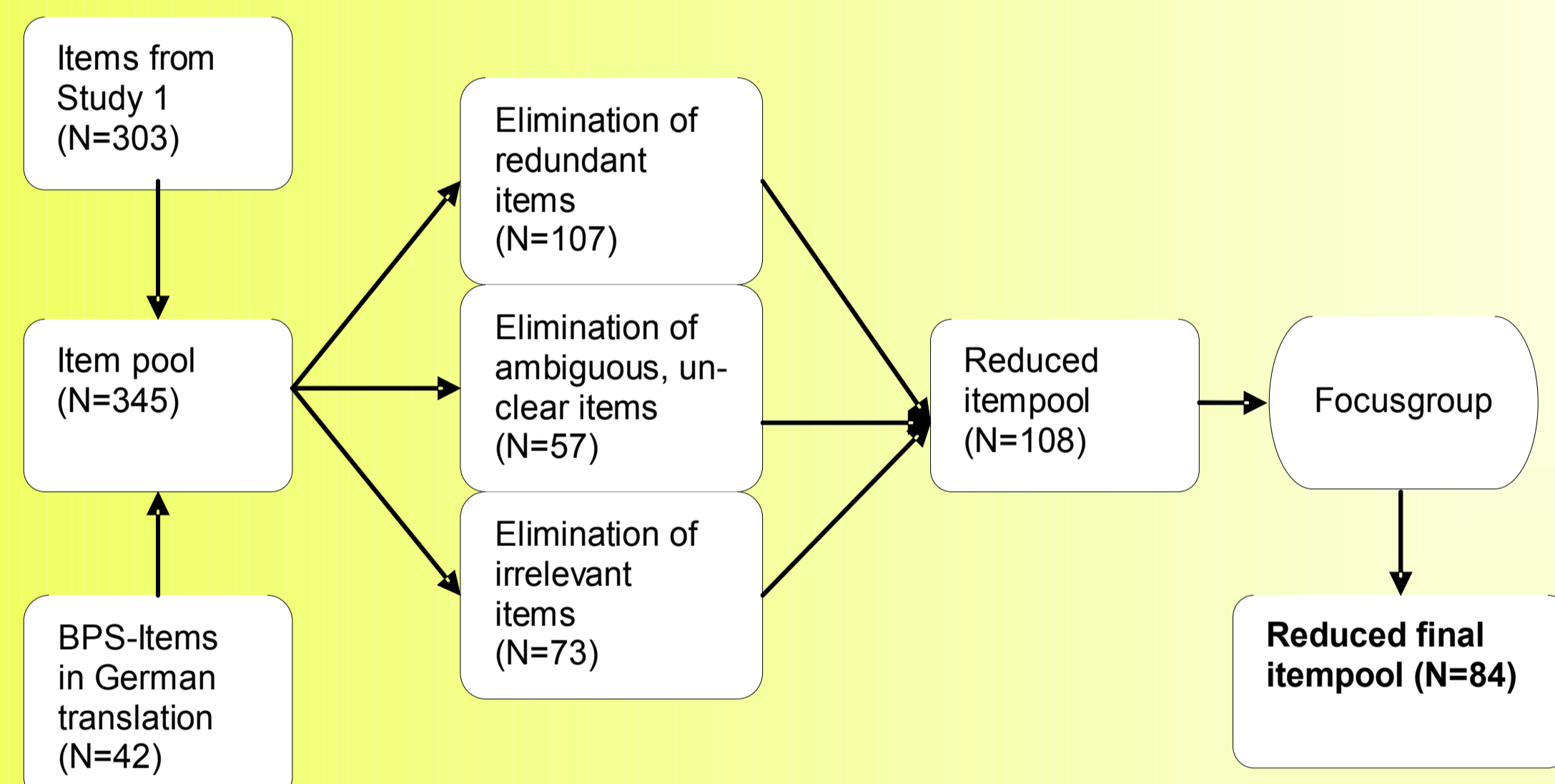
Online questionnaire containing open questions to generate brand personality items (N=88 participants, mainly students, 52% female, 50% 20-29 years old).

Study 2: Factorial Structure of Brand Personality in Germany

Online questionnaire to assess brand personality for altogether eight different brands on the most relevant brand personality items found in study 1 (N=169, mainly students, 62% female, 75% 20-30 years old)



Results



Study 1

Final reduced item pool (N = 84 items) derived through a process of stepwise elimination of unsuitable items contains items with both positive and negative connotations (e.g., „kind“ and „aggressive“).



Study 2

PCA resulted in four brand personality dimensions, labelled Drive, Emotion, Robustness and Superficiality/Annoyance. Moreover, three facets were identified for factor Drive. Based on factor loadings, 24 items were selected into the final measurement scale DEMASK-24, yielding coefficients of internal consistency which ranged from .74 to .85 for the final scale.

Conclusions and Implications

As indicated by the results of the PCA, it appears – contrary to most five dimensional scales from other cultural backgrounds - that only four dimensions are being used to describe brand personalities in Germany.

Negatively valenced attributes seem appropriate when describing brands (factor: Superficiality; Drive-facet: Boredom), a-priori exclusion may underestimate their importance.

Even though based on a non-representative sample of subjects and a small number of brands, the items generated in study 1 may serve as a fruitful collection of attributes for future replications and scale validations.