Brand personality of political parties in Chile: a view from the youngest citizens

Personalidad de marca de los partidos políticos en Chile: una mirada desde los ciudadanos más jóvenes

Personalidade de marca dos partidos políticos no Chile: um olhar desde os cidadãos mais jovens

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the adequacy of the notion of brand personality (Aaker, 1997) in the field of Chilean political parties, measuring their perception in a sample of university students. It is shown that this concept has an adequate validity of construct and reliability, observing a structure of five dimensions (honesty, capacity, up-to-date, energy and uniqueness) similar to that reported in previous studies (Smith, 2009). Additionally, an exploratory analysis of three political parties (left, center and right) is presented, finding deficient perceptions of these, with relevant differences according to the political self-positioning and socioeconomic level of the interviewees.

RESUMEN

Este estudio examina la adecuación de la noción de personalidad de marca (Aaker, 1997) en el ámbito de los partidos políticos chilenos, midiendo su percepción en jóvenes universitarios. Se muestra que este concepto posee una validez de constructo y confiabilidad adecuada, observándose una estructura de cinco dimensiones (honestidad, capacidad, ser actual, energía y ser diferente) similar a la reportada en estudios previos (Smith, 2009). Adicionalmente, se presenta un análisis exploratorio de tres partidos políticos (izquierda, centro y derecha), encontrando percepciones deficientes de estos, con diferencias relevantes según autoposicionamiento político y grupo socioeconómico de los entrevistados.

RESUMO

O presente estudo examina a adequação da noção de personalidade da marca (Aaker, 1997) nos partidos políticos chilenos, medindo sua percepção em jovens estudantes universitários. Mostra-se que esse conceito possui validade na construção e confiabilidade, além de se observar uma estrutura de cinco dimensões (*honestidade, capacidade, ser atual, energia e ser diferente*) semelhante à descrita em estudos anteriores (Smith, 2009). Além disso, é apresentada uma análise exploratória de três partidos políticos (esquerda, centro e direito), encontrando percepções deficientes sobre esses partidos, com diferenças relevantes de acordo com o auto posicionamento político e o grupo socioeconômico dos entrevistados.

Keywords: political marketing, political communication, political parties, branding.

Palabras clave: marketing político; comunicación política; partidos políticos; branding.

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INTRODUCTION

Although the use of marketing techniques has a long history of political action, political marketing as a study area is relatively new. Its development as a discipline began in the seventies, seeking to apply the strategies developed in commercial contexts to political action, especially trying to increase the effectiveness of campaigns in the electorate (O'Shaughnessy, 1990).

It is striking that, although marketing as a discipline encompasses elements that go beyond advertising, the vast majority of political work has focused on this latter area. A clear example of this research scarcity is political branding, an area intimately linked to communication, whose focus is the administration of a positive and differentiated image of candidates and parties (as if they were brands), seeking to make it act as the driving force of choice on the part of citizens (Newman, 1999).

A central concept in branding is that of brand personality, a notion defined by Aaker (1997) and which states that people attribute a set of human characteristics to brands, which act as the basis of the symbolic relationship we establish with them. What is relevant about the above is that research in the commercial field has tended to show that this concept is a fundamental predictor of the effective disposition and preference towards products or services (Ahmad & Thyagaraj, 2015).

This study examines the adequacy of the notion of brand personality in its original definition to the scope of the perception of political parties. The aim is to identify the validity of its use and the key dimensions of the brand personality that act in this case, establishing in addition to what extent they correspond to the same features previously reported by the original research in the field of commercial brands. Antecedents of the above are found in a few studies; the most important is the one developed by Smith (2009), which established the usefulness and the dimensions of this concept in the context of British political parties.

Additionally, this study was conducted in a sample of university students, who are part of the segment of young people between 18 and 25 years old, identified as one of the groups in which the discredit of politics is most strongly manifested (Maureira, 2008). In fact, in this age group it has been detected that, regardless of the degree of politicization of people and how their discourse on politics is articulated, they all converge in a common space: the rejection of formal political institutions (Sandoval & Carvallo, 2017).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

BRANDING AND BRAND PERSONALITY

A brand is defined as a distinctive name or symbol capable of identifying and representing a product or service offered by an organization, generating a difference in a market (Keller, 2003). In this regard, the brand is an asset that must be managed in such a way that this differentiation is perceived and that it generates, in the users' memory, emotional attachment and a purchasing behavior (Peng & Hackley, 2009).

To achieve the above it is essential to understand what are the main dynamics of consumers in their perception of brands. A central notion, in this regard, is the brand personality, a concept that accounts for the key dimensions that consumers use to interpret brand actions and develop a preference for them (Aaker, 1997). In this notion, it is assumed that through direct and indirect contact with brands people perceive in them functional (price, taste, duration, among others) and emotional attributes (a close, young, family brand, etc.), which are symbolically understood as the brands' way of being. Thus, brands are anthropomorphized (Guthrie, 1997), laying the foundations of the consumer-brand relationship and significantly conditioning the disposition and preference or non-preference in a market (Murphy, Moscardo, & Benckendorff, 2007).

MEASURING BRAND PERSONALITY

In her seminal work, Aaker (1997) systematizes the concept of brand personality and proposes a model of five key dimensions that consumers use to evaluate them: sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness (see table 7 at the end of the text). Through a study in three stages, which began with an exhaustive bibliographic review, she constructed a list of more than 300 characteristics or personality traits. Then, she evaluated the relevance and adequacy of these traits based on consumers questionnaires, reaching a tentative set of 114 traits. Finally, she developed a factorial analysis with which she reduced it to a list of 42 items (features), constituting her final instrument.

Subsequent studies conducted outside the United States have reviewed the validity and reliability of the dimensions structure proposed by Aaker (1997), examining potential cultural variations, as well as by product type. Olavarrieta, Friedmann and Manzur (2010) validated the use of the original brand personality model by applying it to 37 Chilean brands representative of different industries. These authors verified the dimensionality of the model (obtaining an

explained variance of almost 80%) with the existence of six dimensions: the same proposed by Aaker, to which they added tradition. Farrandi, Valette-Florence and Fine-Falcy (2000) evaluated its validity in the French context, reducing the number of traits to 33, but obtaining the same original five-dimensions structure from Aaker (1997). Austin, Siguaw and Mattila (2003) analyzed this scale in the context of restaurant brands. The results show that Aaker's structure of factors (dimensions) had adequate indicators of validity for the analysis of the category in general (all brands together), but they found some differences when applying it to individual brands. Thus, beyond some limitations reported and variations observed in different contexts, the Aaker scale (1997) remains the most robust and used in the literature, mainly because it provides a tool with high levels of validity, with reliable scales and which is also relatively easy to use (Lee and Cho, 2012).

POLITICAL PARTIES: BRANDS AND BRAND PERSONALITY

There is no consensus in accepting that parties can be treated as brands. The main argument that has been given is that the political world is, in essence, different from commercial markets (Rothschild, 1979). There have been warnings about the diverse nature of products and services regarding the political activity, as well as about the difference of the decision faced by consumers versus voters (Lock and Harris, 1996).

Without ignoring such differences, other authors have stressed that people, in their various roles (as consumers and citizens), relate to names, terms or symbols (i.e., brands), which identify certain groups, organizations, services or products, and that these names are a key factor in the decision process of developing a preference (Newman, 1999). Thus, they have argued that political parties conform, in general terms, to the process of brand analysis, such as denominations (names) that generate a mental representation that acts as one of the central foundations of the political decision-making process (Smith, 2009).

Thus, the brand personality of political parties has been defined as a network of associations with human characteristics related to a political group, which are in the memory and can be accessed when the memory is stimulated or a voter is faced to a call for action (Smith, 2009). As it happens in markets, the construction of the brand personality of a party occurs through the direct or indirect contact that people have with the parties on a daily basis, which occurs mainly through communicational spaces (that is, news, political campaigns). In this process, certain features derived from the image that is being perceptually constructed are attributed to the parties (Gorbaniuk, Kusak, Kogut, & Kustos, 2015). That does not mean, however, that the brand personality of a party is the only determinant of intentionality to vote or to join a party. Along with it, there are other fundamental components of this provision, such as previous political sympathy, the media consumed, elements of the campaign and the characteristics of the candidates (Banerjee & Chauduri, 2016).

In the case of political parties, only three studies indexed in the Web of Science (WoS) have examined brand personality, two of them using the Aaker model (1997). Schneider (2004) analyzed the brand personality of German politicians and parties using her original features. Although this author managed to detect that these features are capable of differentiating the different actors and political entities, the study did not examine the psychometric properties of the measurements conducted, so there is no analysis of the dimensionality of personality characteristics (Gorbaniuk et al., 2015).

Secondly, the aforementioned study by Smith (2009) is undoubtedly the most solid of the articles conducted to date. This paper examined the concept of Aaker's original brand personality in political parties using a sample of 183 English university students. In the initial phase of the study, a group of experts was asked to evaluate the features, eliminating eight from Aaker's original list (1997) because they were considered alien to politics. After this process, the instrument with 34 features was applied to a sample of students, who were asked to evaluate the Labor Party and the Conservative Party based on them. The results revealed a dimensional structure for British parties slightly different from those traditionally found for brands in general. The study revealed the existence of six dimensions (instead of five): honesty, spirited, image, leadership, toughness and uniqueness (table 1).

A third study was recently presented by Gorbaniuk et al. (2015). These authors conducted an analysis in Poland with a list of features different from that of Aaker (1997). Based on interviews with 120 people, they extracted more than 3200 possible associations with parties, which were subsequently subjected to a frequency evaluation, leaving 102 descriptors or personality traits. From there, the authors developed the final phase that allowed them to obtain a dimensional structure of three factors: integrity, displeasure and

Dimension	Features
Honesty	Honest, reliable, wholesome, sincere, real, sentimental, down-to-earth and friendly.
Spirited	Spirited, daring, imaginative, up-to-date and cheerful.
Image	Smooth, good-looking, trendy, young, cool, exciting and contemporary.
Leadership	Leader, confident, intelligent, successful, hardworking, technical and secure.
Toughness	Masculine, rugged, tough and outdoorsy.
Uniqueness	Unique, independent and original.

Table 1. Political parties' brand personality dimensions

Source: Own elaboration, with data from Smith, 2009.

strength. Finally, they developed a new study that confirmed this factorial structure, also evaluating the psychometric properties (dimensionality and reliability) of the scale used.

There are also two studies indexed in Scopus/SciELO[1] conducted by Araya-Castillo and Etchebarne (2014a; 2014b) in Chile. These authors sought to develop their own model of party brand personality (similar to the work of Gorbaniuk et al., 2015) based on interviews with university students. After an exploratory phase, these scholars ended up with a model of eight factors: sincerity, ambition, competence, stimulating, traditional, sophisticated, thoughness and elitist (Araya-Castillo & Etchebarne, 2014a). In a second stage, this model was applied to Chilean parties (Araya-Castillo & Etchebarne, 2014b), observing that those on the right-wing appear more frequently associated with the attributes of being conservative, formal, traditional and ambitious, those at the center as more opportunistic, conflictive and also ambitious, and those of the left more aggressive and passionate. One of the difficulties with this analysis is that it does not report the obtained values or the statistical differences between the parties. Therefore, the results are more like a description of the most present attributes of each party, but it is not known if this is due to the fact that they have significantly higher scores in that dimension.

METHODOLOGY

SAMPLE

During the first semester of 2017, we conducted a cross-sectional quantitative study, based on surveys applied to a sample of 276 university students between 18 and 25 years old. This age group complies with

being part of a generation that constitutes a significant percentage of the abstention figures in politics[2]. However, it is essential to clarify that this is a sample with levels of education well above the average of the Chilean population in general, and of that age in particular. The use of this sample responds to criteria of accessibility, of representing the group that has been frequently used in previous studies, and of being people who have relatively homogeneous socio-demographic, as well as socio-cultural, characteristics in terms of education (allowing to reduce the influence of other exogenous variables).

DEPENDENT VARIABLE

a. **Perception of brand personality of political parties:** we used the scale of Smith (2009), which in turn is an adaptation of Aaker's scale (1997), which –currently– represents the one of greatest use and robustness. We evaluated 34 traits through a Likert scale, from 1 to 5 (table 2). People were asked to answer the following question for each analyzed party: on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is nothing and 5 is totally, to what extent do each of the following features describe your perception of the party…? b) We incorporated three political parties, one from the right (Unión Demócrata Independiente – UDI), one from the center (Democracia Cristiana – DC) and one from the left (Partido Comunista – PC). These parties were chosen because they represent different positions of the spectrum, because they are recognized with those respective tendencies and because for the last ten years they have been national parties (SERVEL, 2015). The evaluation of the parties was conducted in random order to avoid effects of order bias (Malhotra, 2008).

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

a. **Gender:** it was measured through a direct question in which the individual defines its gender (man or woman).

b. **Socioeconomic group (SEG):** measured by an abbreviated scale developed by Kantar IBOPE Media (2016): it consists of three items that conclude in an approximation of the socioeconomic level based on questions about the head of the household (educational level and labor hierarchy) and the tenure of eleven goods and services. From there, a score is constructed that allows to classify people according to their socioeconomic level.

c. **Political self-positioning:** it was measured through a question in which the individuals were placed in a continuum of political position. We used a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 represents extreme left and 10, extreme right (Frías, 2001).

METHOD

a. **Pre-test:** we conducted a previous study aiming for a first revision of the scale. It began with a validation of experts, asking a group of four specialists in public opinion studies to establish the relevance of the features defined by Smith (2009) in its Spanish version –constructed based on the translation by Olavarrieta et al. (2010) of Aaker's features –. No items were removed after this revision. The second part of the pre-test was carried out during the month of May 2017, applying the questionnaire to a sample analogous to that used in the final phase of the study (*n*=24). In this stage, we verified the average duration of the survey (seven minutes) and the interviewees' understanding of the items/traits.

b. **Development of the study:** once the proposed scale was preliminary validated, we extracted the data from the final sample by conduction a face-to-face survey during the month of June 2017, obtaining 268 complete surveys.

RESULTS

CHARACTERIZATION OF THE SAMPLE

Of the final sample, 43% of the respondents were women and 57%, men, with an average age of 20 years and 8 months. In socioeconomic terms, 36% belongs to the upper class, 37% to the upper-middle class, 19% to the middle class and 3% to the lower-middle class. That is, it is a young sample, with a greater male presence, with a university education and dominated by the presence of people belonging to the upper and upper-middle classes (73%).

Regarding the political self-positioning, we observe an average value of 5.1 (5.5 is the middle of the scale), where almost 21% is located on the left (values 1-3), 36% in the center-left (values 4-5), 32.6% in the center-right (values 6-7) and 10.3% in the right (values 8-10), which indicates a fairly balanced sample in political terms, with a slight predominance of the left sector (values equal to or less than 5) (figure 1).

DIMENSIONALITY AND RELIABILITY OF THE SCALE

The principal components analysis gave a structure of five factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0, explaining 63.87% of the variance, a sample adequacy measure of 0.959 and a significant Bartlett's sphericity test (0.000). No items/traits were eliminated, given that in their totality they have communalities that are very close or over the value 0.5 (table 2).

In this factorial structure, the first dimension was called honest/sincere, which has 43.8% of explained variance, being the most important. It is composed of six features: honest, close, sincere, upright, real and dependable, and its name derives from the fact that the central element to which these features point refers to political parties showing themselves as they are. The second dimension, capacity/competence, reaches an explained variance of 7.0%. It considers eleven traits: successful, professional, intelligent, self-confident, strong, leader, resistant, masculine, hardworking, calm and realistic, and was named this way since most of the traits point to having greater technical conditions to be able to actually apply the proposals and manage a government. The third dimension was called current/contemporary, which has an explained variance of 5.8%. It consists of seven traits: current, cool, in style, contemporary, young, exciting and attractive, and was named that way because all the elements that compose it point to be consistent with current times. The fourth dimension was called energetic/vibrating, and accounts for 3.7% of the variance. It includes the features energetic, bold, imaginative, sentimental, friendly and cheerful, and it was given that name since all traits point centrally to having character and decision to carry things forward. Finally, the fifth dimension was called unique/different, and accounts
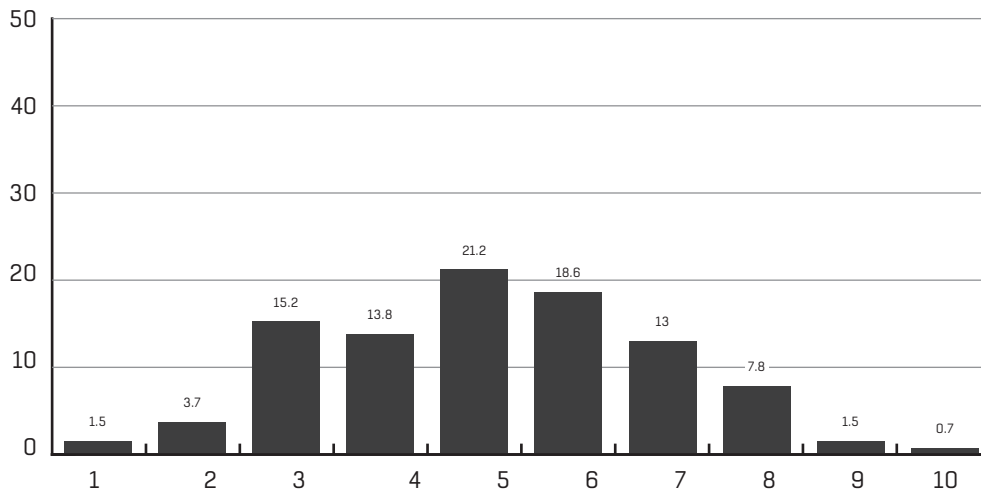
Figure 1: Distribution of the sample by political self-positioning

Source: Own elaboration.

for 3.5% of the variance. It incorporates three features: unique, independent and original, and its name derives from the fact that the features refer to the capacity of differentiating from the rest of the parties (table 2).

Considering the reliability of the sets of traits incorporated in each one of the brand personality dimensions, it is possible to observe that the reliability indicators or Cronbach's Alpha of each one of them show levels higher than 0.7 (table 2). Thus, we can point out that the brand personality measurement scale possesses adequate psychometric properties in terms of dimensionality and reliability in the context of political parties in Chile (Malhotra, 2008).

PERCEPTION OF POLITICAL PARTIES

Next, we proceeded to examine[3] the specific brand personality perception of the three parties incorporated in this study. A first relevant result is that, in terms of total results (by dimension, by party and overall), the evaluation of the political parties in the sample of young people employed in this study is quite negative. In the range of 1 to 5 (see methodology), we observe that the general average of the parties evaluated reaches 2.27, a number that indicates that those brand personality traits would be desirable to generate a good bond with the parties are scarce. This is also detected when comparing the parties' general means, where there are figures between 2.17 and 2.41. It is important to mention that between the DC and the UDI there

are no significant differences in the total results, but they are significant differences between the PC and the DC (t=3,590, p=0,000) and the PC and the UDI (t=2,558, p=0.011), where the first party (PC) has a light evaluation, but significantly less bad (table 3).

Analyzing the brand personality dimensions, the PC has statistically significant differences with the rest of the evaluated parties in several of them (see table 4). One refers to honesty (the variable that most explains the variance), where the UDI has a lower average than the DC (t=2.783, p=0.006) and that the PC (t=2.380, p=0.018). The second is in current/contemporary, where the PC also has superiority over the UDI (t=3,603, p=0,000) and the DC (t=4,577, p=0,000). The third corresponds to the energetic/vibrant dimension, where the PC also exceeds both the UDI (t=6.795, p=0.000) and the DC (t=6.690, p=0.000). An opposite situation occurs in the case of capable/competent, which is the attribute in which the UDI has superiority against both the DC (t=3.542, p=0.000) and the PC (t=2.425, p=0.016). Finally, in the case of unique/different, the DC that has a worse evaluation than the UDI (t= 2.116, p=0.035) and the PC (t= 2.511, p=0.012). Thus, it can be observed that the PC has a less negative evaluation in three attributes, and its energy stands out; the UDI is relatively better evaluated in terms of its aptitude (which is the second dimension in relevance), while the DC is not perceived with any relative superiority in any dimension.

Dimension	Feature	1	2	3	4	5	% Variance	Cronbach's Alpha
Honest/sincere	Honest	**0.81**	0.12	0.24	0.16	0.19	43.79	0.92
	Reliable	**0.77**	0.18	0.29	0.18	0.18		
	Sincere	**0.73**	0.18	0.26	0.22	0.24		
	Wholesome	**0.71**	0.33	0.19	0.16	0.05		
	Down-to-earth	**0.66**	0.24	0.27	0.25	0.22		
	Confident	**0.63**	0.34	0.34	0.11	0.18		
Capable/ competent	Successful	0.21	**0.77**	0.21	0.05	0.06	7.01	0.89
	Technical	0.39	**0.70**	0.16	0.18	0.08		
	Intelligent	0.29	**0.69**	0.25	0.20	0.05		
	Secure	0.39	**0.64**	0.22	0.15	0.13		
	Rugged	0.04	**0.61**	0.20	0.35	0.40		
	Leader	0.16	**0.60**	0.34	0.25	0.15		
	Tough	0.02	**0.54**	0.13	0.46	0.42		
	Masculine	-0.05	**0.52**	-0.13	0.01	0.41		
	Hardworking	0.38	**0.50**	0.20	0.38	0.17		
	Smooth	0.45	**0.49**	0.03	-0.12	-0.09		
	Down-to-earth	0.46	**0.48**	0.36	0.07	0.06		
Current/ contemporary	Current	0.21	0.27	**0.74**	0.18	0.11	5.81	0.90
	Cool	0.34	0.10	**0.70**	0.20	0.20		
	Trendy	0.19	0.23	**0.69**	0.25	-0.01		
	Contemporary	0.26	0.27	**0.66**	0.24	0.15		
	Young	0.13	0.02	**0.65**	0.44	0.14		
	Exciting	0.30	0.10	**0.63**	0.36	0.23		
	Good-looking	0.39	0.30	**0.61**	0.10	0.13		
Spirited/vibrant	Spirited	0.15	0.20	0.20	**0.76**	0.10	3.73	0.83
	Daring	0.01	0.04	0.26	**0.74**	0.12		
	Imaginative	0.07	0.07	0.29	**0.64**	0.06		
	Sentimental	0.29	0.10	0.04	**0.64**	0.07		
	Friendly	0.48	0.22	0.21	**0.53**	-0.03		
	Cheerful	0.32	0.26	0.39	**0.50**	-0.02		
	Outdoorsy	0.16	0.33	0.31	**0.49**	0.36		
Unique/different	Unique	0.28	0.15	0.18	0.13	**0.72**	3.54	0.75
	Independent	0.34	0.16	0.27	0.11	**0.61**		
	Original	0.45	0.10	0.40	0.18	**0.49**		

Table 2. Summary table with matrix of rotated components – personality traits, dimensions and reliability

Source: Own elaboration.

Dimensión	UDI	DC	PC	Total
Honest/sincere	1.97	2.19	2.17	2.11
Capable/competent	2.71	2.44	2.52	2.56
Current/contemporary	1.91	1.84	2.19	1.98
Spirited/vibrant	2.34	2.36	2.88	2.53
Unique/different	2.24	2.05	2.28	2.19
TOTAL	2.23	2.17	2.41	2.27

Table 3. Evaluation of the brand personality of political parties
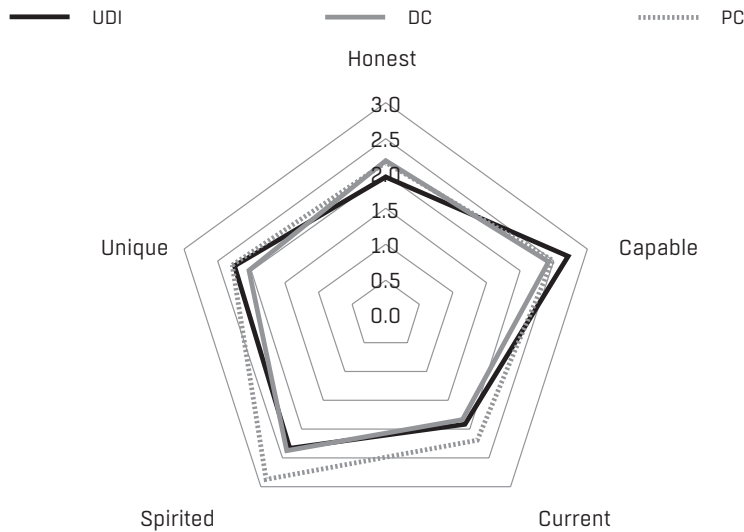
Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 2. Brand personality of the evaluated political parties

Source: Own elaboration.

ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL PARTIES ACCORDING TO INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

When examining the perception of brand personality by gender, SEG and political self-positioning, there are some interesting differences worth mentioning. Regarding gender, the ANOVA test shows that brand personality perceptions are similar in all factors. The only exception is in the honest dimension in the UDI, which women evaluate better than men (t=2.582, p=0.009).

A different situation is observed by socioeconomic level. When comparing the upper class with the upper-middle and the rest of the participants, it can be seen that in the case of the UDI there are significant differences (F=9.283, p=0.000); the polynomial contrast

(F=18.315, p=0.000) shows that this change is linear: as the socioeconomic class lowers, the general evaluation of this party worsens. The same happens with the DC, in which significant differences are observed regarding the assessment of brand personality by SEG (F=7.113, p=0.000); these differences are linear, as shown by the polynomial analysis (F=13.754, p=0.000). This shows that, as the socioeconomic class lowers, the evaluation of the DC also falls significantly. Finally, the PC is in a different situation: although descriptively its worst evaluation is in the upper class, the differences by SEG are not statistically significant (table 4).

A final analysis refers to the existence of possible differences in the brand personality of the parties by

	UDI			DC			PC		
	Upper	Upper-middle	Lower-middle and lower	Upper	Upper-middle	Lower-middle and lower	Upper	Upper-middle	Lower-middle and lower
Honest/sincere	2.23	1.96	1.56	2.34	2.19	1.92	2.12	2.23	2.19
Capable/competent	2.91	2.69	2.42	2.54	2.47	2.22	2.49	2.55	2.53
Current/contemporary	2.10	1.88	1.63	2.01	1.80	1.64	2.10	2.24	2.25
Energetic/vibrant	2.50	2.32	2.13	2.56	2.32	2.08	2.87	2.87	2.92
Unique/different	2.50	2.19	1.92	2.2	2.12	1.69	2.32	2.37	2.16
TOTAL	2.45	2.21	1.93	2.33	2.18	1.91	2.30	2.45	2.41

Table 4. Brand personality of the political parties evaluated by socioeconomic group

Source: Own elaboration.

	Left			Center			Right		
	UDI	DC	PC	UDI	DC	PC	UDI	DC	PC
Honest/sincere	1.47	2.12	2.60	1.98	2.21	2.04	2.66	2.26	1.78
Capable/competent	2.37	2.41	2.82	2.67	2.42	2.40	3.30	2.49	2.35
Current/contemporary	1.57	1.71	2.48	1.87	1.87	2.03	2.45	2.02	2.05
Energetic/vibrant	2.11	2.18	3.02	2.36	2.35	2.84	2.65	2.64	2.81
Unique/different	2.03	1.98	2.54	2.07	1.99	2.03	2.84	2.23	2.30
TOTAL	1.91	2.08	2.69	2.19	2.17	2.27	2.78	2.33	2.26

Table 5. Brand personality of political parties evaluated by political position

Source: Own elaboration.

political position. The interviewees were grouped into three segments according to their self-positioning: values 1 to 3 were labeled as left, values 4 to 7 as center and values 8 to 10 as right. The results show that, among people who define themselves as left and right, there are significant differences in the evaluation of political parties (table 5). In the case of those on the left, as the parties moves to the left, people evaluate them better (F=28.851, p=0.000). In this case, the polynomial analysis confirms that this change is linear (F =52.218, p=0.000). In the case of those on the right, there are differences (F=8.376, p=0.000) that are not linear in the political continuum. Differences appear between the evaluation of the UDI versus the DC (t=3.253, p=0.001)

and the PC (t=3.599, p=0.000), but not between these last two parties. In other words, the people on the right evaluate the UDI with more brand personality attributes, and evaluate the DC and the PC similarly.

COMPARISON WITH PRIOR RESEARCH

When comparing the results obtained in this study with those reported by Smith (2009) in England, as well as those of Aaker's (1997the original study, it is possible to observe that there are important similarities and differences between them (see table 6)[4].

Regarding the similarities, the most important dimension in the three studies is related to the elements of honesty/sincerity. Although this feature is shown in

Aaker (1997) USA 42 traits	Explained variance	Smith (2009) United Kingdom 34 traits	Explained variance	Chile (2017) 30 traits	Explained variance
Down-to-earth, family-oriented, small-town, honest, sincere, real, wholesome, original, cheerful, sentimental, and friendly.	26.5%	Honest, reliable, wholesome, sincere, real, sentimental, down-to-earth and friendly.	32%	Honest, reliable, sincere, wholesome, real and confident.	43.8%
Daring, trendy, exciting, spirited, cool, young, imaginative, unique, , up-to-date, independent , , , andcontemporary .	25.1%	Smooth, good-looking, trendy, young, cool, exciting and contemporary.	6%	Current, cool, contemporary, trendy, exciting, fashionable and good-looking.	5.8%
[Not Applicable]	-	Spirited, daring, imaginative, up-to-date and cheerful.	10%	Spirited, daring, imaginative, sentimental, friendly, cheerful and extroverted.	3.7%
Reliable, hardworking, secure, intelligent, technical, corporate, successful, leader, and confident.	17.5%	Leader, confident, intelligent, successful, hardworking, technical and secure.	4%	Successful, technical, intelligent, secure, rugged, leader, tough, masculine, hardworking, calm and down-to-earth.	7.0%
Upper class, glamorous, good-looking, charming, feminine and smooth.	11.9%	[Not Applicable]	-	[Not Applicable]	-
Outdoosy, masculine, western, tough and rugged.	8.8%	Masculine, rugged, tough and outdoorsy.	5%	[Not Applicable]	-
[Not Applicable]	-	Unique, original and independent.	3%	Unique, original and independent.	3.5%

Table 6. Comparison of the dimensions of the studies by Aaker (1989), Smith (2009) and current (grouped by relative similarity).

Source: Own elaboration.

several studies as the most relevant, in the case of politics it acquires a particular explanatory power, particularly in Chile, becoming –by far– the personality trait of greater relative importance. Second, the three studies highlight a dimension linked to being current/contemporary, as well as another linked to the worker/professional. These three elements appear cross-sectionally in the studies using both commercial brands and parties from England and Chile. Additionally, these two studies related to political parties have a high similarity in terms of the dimensions that are built based on their features. Although in the study by Smith (2009) there is a dimension related to toughness, the rest are quite similar, beyond the denomination chosen for each factor. This suggests the existence of a concurrent validity in the brand personality studies of political parties. To this we must add that the variance explained by the dimensions in this study is similar to that observed by Smith, which reaches 60% in the six dimensions with an eigenvalue higher than 1 (this study achieves

a 63.87%). This means that the dimensions to evaluate the parties tend to be, in essence, similar among the university students of the United Kingdom and Chile, which gives a strong support to the use of the concept of brand personality in the field of political parties.

Regarding the differences, the most relevant arise when contrasting these results with the study by Smith (2009), which has six factors, while the Chilean study only has five (such as Aaker, 1997). Although this dimensional structure is similar in number, it is not exactly the same when comparing the studies developed in the context of political parties. In addition, these two studies in personality of political brand have a level of explained variance of nearly 60%, lower than that reported by Aaker (1997), which achieves over 80% in its five dimensions. This may be indicative that, although in the case of political parties the brand personality model possesses a good level of explanatory power, the personality traits employed are less powerful in the analysis of political brands than in the analysis of brands in the world of commercial products.

On the other hand, when comparing these results with those observed by Araya and Etchebarne (2014b) in their analysis of the perception of political parties, there are quite a few differences, mainly due to the scarce comparability of the studies and the limitations of how the data were reported by those authors. For example, right-wing parties tended to be grouped as conservative and traditional, which is not consistent with the idea of the capacity attribute, the most present for those parties according to Aaker (1997) and Smith's (2009) classification.

CONCLUSIONS

Assuming that the construction of a positive perception of a political party is a key strategic element towards which various communicational actions point, this study examined the adequacy of the notion of brand personality in this area. The scale originally developed by Aaker (1997) and adapted to political parties by Smith (2009) was applied in a sample of Chilean university students. This group, as part of the young segment, represents a sector that is particularly critical and distant from current politics; the authorities have made various efforts to encourage them to be more in tune with the institutional democratic system.

The results show, in the first place, the adequacy of the brand personality model to evaluate the political parties –at least in Chile–, for a group of university

students. There is a series of dimensions that underlies the responses of the people interviewed and that manages to explain almost two thirds of the variability in the answers obtained. In other words, it is possible to point out that the measurement of brand personality in political parties has a good validity construct, which allows to raise the pertinence of the concepts assumed in its measurement (Cronbach, 1960). This must be complemented by the fact that the extracted traits were linked without problems in one factor, each with factor loadings of around 0.5 or higher (that is, none had to be eliminated of the study) and that the reliability of the dimensions was met, since Cronbach's Alphas were superior to 0.7 in all cases. That is, the measurement and use of brand personality in the context of political parties possesses the basic psychometric properties necessary to affirm that we are dealing with a concept that appropriately accounts for the phenomenon we are studying.

In addition, similar results in terms of dimensions were previously observed in the United Kingdom by Smith (2009). The similarity between the two studies occurs at several levels: in terms of the structure of factors, which differs only in one (five versus six); regarding the percentage of explained variance in both studies by the list of traits, which in both cases exceeds 60%, and in terms of the similarity of the traits of each dimension. Thus, there are essential elements that raise the potential existence of concurrent validity of the concept of brand personality in political parties and of the instrument used to measure it (Campbell & Fiske, 1959; Messick, 1994).

DISCUSSION

This study provides a solid methodologically tool for the strategic evaluation of political parties as perceived by citizens (that is, as brands). The citizens –the same that in another context are consumers– see a way of being of the parties (personality) and bond with them in terms of their honesty, competence, being current, energy and being different from others (Scammell, 2015). Considering these elements can significantly help the parties to develop and maintain positive relations with society in general, and also to help their members to be more persuasive (Ahmad & Thyagaraj, 2015).

In this regard, those personality features, and particularly the first one (the perception of honesty) appear as relevant factors to generate a more powerful relationship between citizens (at least university

students) and the political world (Smith, 2009). This implies that this should be a fundamental axis of the parties' strategy to improve their relationship with citizens, and also supports the current action of several governments of the region that are taking measures to regulate and making transparent the action of the parties, especially in terms of their use of resources (Engel, 2015).

The above does not mean that the use of the brand personality concept explains the complexity of the problem. This study shows some elements to consider, but also has some limitations. The first one is that the dimensions detected in the Chilean and British studies with political parties are not exactly the same and, in turn, these also differ partially from the studies conducted on commercial brands (Aaker, 1997; Olavarrieta et al., 2010).

In addition, the explained variance in the studies on commercial brands is superior to the one observed in two studies on political parties (Chile and England). This shows that, although it functions adequately as a strategic tool for evaluating political-communication efforts and possesses the basic elements of validity and reliability, the concept of brand personality needs to be used judiciously. That is, it can be a relevant tool to examine and compare the situation of political parties in Chile, but its adaptation process from the world of commercial brands is not finalized. As noted by Gorbaniuk et al. (2015), it is possible that there are additional attributes to those indicated here, typical of politics, that are not considered, which should be addressed by future research. Along with this, it is important to measure the effective association between the concept of brand personality and political adhesion and effective voting, to see if that aspect – that has been observed in the market of goods and services– also occurs in the political context (Ahmad & Thyagaraj, 2015).

Along with the above, this study explored the brand personality of a set of parties of different tendencies, as well as the role of some variables such as gender, SEG and political self-positioning. The results show, first, that the general evaluation of the parties is quite negative, with low scores in all the dimensions (low presence of the relevant elements of the brand personality). This only confirms the poor image that young people have of political parties, as has been documented by several previous investigations (Carrasco, 2010).

Regarding the differences in the perception of the brand personality of the parties, it is possible to say

that, in a general context of poor evaluation, there are some differences. The main asset of the UDI is the idea of its aptitude/capacity, which is consistent with the permanent discourse of the right on efficiency and capacity/competence (Muñoz-Navarro, 2008). This occurs in all socioeconomic segments and political positions, although obviously more among people of upper class and right-wing. In the case of the PC, it stands out in several attributes over the other parties (even though it is not a positive evaluation), particularly in the energy dimension. This would highlight an aspect of the left and the PC, particularly in the university world: being active, being in the mobilizations (Llamazarez & Sandell, 2003). In addition, this party has a relatively similar assessment in all the socioeconomic segments and the change in the perception of its brand personality is according to the political position (worse evaluation of right-wing people). The case of the DC is a paradox. In a sample in which the vast majority of respondents self-declares as center-wing, the parties with the best relative evaluation are the UDI (right) and the PC (left). This would show, apparently, the relevance of having some identifying element, as it is in the case of the PC with the energy or of the UDI with the aptitude/competence.

Finally, it is important to emphasize that the sample used (university students) represents a limitation and strength of the study. A limitation because the results have a tentative character: it is a non-probabilistic sample of young people with high educational level and upper and middle socioeconomic status. In this regard, future studies should examine other segments to see if the detected results can also be obtained in alternative groups of greater age, different education and from lower-income sectors, so that there is more evidence on the key dimensions of evaluation of political parties in Chile and, ideally, in Latin America (Valdez Cepeda, 2003).

However, the fact that this study has been done with university students is also a strength, since it allows examining at least part of the case of the youth segment. As it can be seen, their evaluation of the parties is deficient, that is, they do not see any outstanding element. This is observed in the fact that there are no average scores over 3, which is neutral in the Likert scale used (in some cases, there are average values close to 1.9); this shows that the key dimensions of brand personality observed in the parties are weak for this young and educated segment. If we consider that the generation participating of this study has shown a high capacity for political mobilization in Chile (Cárdenas

Neira, 2016), it is notorious that it is so self-placed outside the spaces created by the parties, which appear in this study as instances with which it does not seem relevant or attractive to have a link.

Viewed from a more general perspective, the study calls attention to the importance of incorporating elements of communication management and image from other areas, as useful tools to improve the effectiveness of political communication. The elements of analysis of the user-brand relationship described by Aaker's personality model are significant; these showed an important level of explanation of the variance when analyzing a party as if it were a commercial brand.

This study provides evidence of the relative applicability of the brand concept to political parties, as has been debated by various authors (Marland, 2003). In light of the results, people (at least young people) perceive these entities also in terms of the elements that constitute their relationship with brands, which is another evidence that the roles of consumer and citizen are different, but that they share common evaluation processes of the entities studied (Smith, 2009).

FOOTNOTES

1. Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO), a platform that includes a selected collection of Latin American scientific publications.

2. Around 5,700,000 people voted in the presidential elections of 2013; less than 400,000 were between 18 and 25 years old (SERVEL, 2015).

3. It is important to clarify at this point that these evaluations are only of an exploratory nature, since the sample used does not allow extrapolations to a larger universe of voters.

4. In terms of factor structure, only those studies are compared since it uses the same set of items.

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