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"I'm a Mac" versus "I'm a PC": Personality Differences between Mac and PC Users in a College Sample

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ABSTRACT

One hundred eight college students who had purchased either a Mac or PC laptop computer completed measures of the Big Five personality traits, ratings of brand characteristics of Macs and PCs, measures of implicit attitudes toward these products, and determinants of brand choices. Big Five personality traits did not differentiate between Mac and PC owners. Students overall rated Macs higher on various product attributes (attractive style, cool, youthful, and exciting) and PCs higher on reasonable price and good for gaming. Brand owners rated their own brands higher on characteristics of reliability, good for homework, ease of use, good for Internet surfing, and good features. PC owners placed greater importance on cost as a determinant of brand choice, whereas Mac owners placed greater emphasis on style. Personality traits may have more nuanced effects on brand choices, as shown by relationships between Neuroticism and greater importance placed on cost and lesser importance placed on ease of use. Openness to Experience was associated with greater importance placed on reliability and lesser importance placed on style. Supporting the predictive validity of the Implicit Association Test (IAT) in predicting consumer preferences, Mac owners showed more favorable implicit attitudes and stronger implicit self-identification with Macs than did PC owners. Implicit attitudes also predicted self-reported ratings of various product characteristics.

In a recent advertising campaign sponsored by Apple Computer pitting Macs versus PCs featured an anthropomorphic representation of a Mac personality ("I'm a Mac") and a PC personality ("I'm a PC"). The "Mac" personality was represented by a spokesperson who appeared youthful, cool, and laid back, whereas the "PC" personality was depicted as staid, conventional, and something of a "fuddy-duddy." Forced to respond to the nerdy image of the PC owner portrayed in the Apple commercials, Microsoft responded in kind, emphasizing in their commercial campaign the creative spontaneity of typical PC users. The question is, are there personality differences between owners of these respective brands?

The study of relationships between personality and consumer behavior has a long history but was largely abandoned in the 1970s (Bosnjak, Bratko, Galesic, & Tuten, 2007). A review of the literature through the 1960s showed relationships between brand choice and consumer personality that was best described as equivocal, with personality accounting for no more than 10% of the variance in consumer behavior (Kassarjian, 1971). In recent years, investigators have stirred the pot again by examining relationships between consumer behaviors and individual difference factors in such areas as retailing (Puccinelli, Deshpande, & Isen, 2007), online shopping behavior (Bosnjak, Galesic, & Tulen, 2007), and postpurchasing processes (Mooradian & Olver, 1997).

Much of the attention among marketing researchers on the role of personality in consumer behavior has focused on development of models of brand personality, and in particular, relationships between the organization of brand personality and human personality, as represented by the Big Five model. The Big Five model of personality represents five broad factors (Extraversion, Neuroticism, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness) found most consistently in research on personality traits across many different cultures (Hofstee, 2003; McCrae & Terracciano, 2005; Schmitt, Allik, McCrae, & Benet-Martínez, 2007; Widiger, 2005).

Aaker (1997) introduced the concept of "brand personality" to represent the set of human characteristics associated with a particular brand. Brand personality is influenced in part by the image of the brand the company projects in its branding and advertising. Investigators have examined relationships between consumer personality and various aspects of brand personalities. For example, consumers who were higher

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in the Big Five trait of Conscientiousness showed stronger preferences for "Trusted" brands, whereas trait Extraversion was related to preferences for "Sociable" brands (Mulyanegara, Tsarenko, & Anderson, 2009). A Taiwanese survey of consumers at a shopping mall reported associations between trait Extraversion in consumers and "excitement" brand personality (Lin, 2010). Moreover, trait Agreeableness was associated with excitement, competence, and sincerity brand personalities.

Other investigators find that consumers seeking to enhance their self-image are drawn to brands with attractive personalities (Escalas & Bettman, 2003). Other evidence indicates that using a brand with an appealing personality (e.g., Victoria's Secret shopping bag) can "rub off" on some consumers, producing more positive self-perceptions of characteristics associated with the brands they used (Park & John, 2010).

Investigators have also examined whether brand personalities are organized in a factorial model similar to that of the Five Factor Model (FFM) or Big Five model. Although Aaker (1997) reported some overlap between the respective set of factors, other investigators find more variant factor structures (e.g., Caprara, Barbaranelli, & Guido, 2001; d'Astous & Boujbel, 2007; Venable, Rose, Bush, & Gilbert, 2005). Caprara, Barbaranelli, and Guido (2001), for example, failed to find support for the comparability of brand personalities and human personality organization. These investigators had participants rate themselves and the personalities of three brands on the same set of adjectives representing the Big Five model of personality. A factor analysis showed a higher level structure in ratings of brand personalities that was better represented by a two-factor model than the five-factor model. Moreover, the personality descriptions conveyed different meanings when applied to brands than persons. These results suggest that brand personalities may not be reducible to the same set of factors found in studies of human personalities. Irrespective of whether the same set of personality descriptions can be used to represent human and brand personalities, research is needed to further explore the degree to which consumer personality traits map onto brand preferences and product choices.

There is ample research literature attesting to the usefulness of Big Five traits in predicting a wide range of outcomes. For example, Extraversion is associated with personal happiness, whereas Agreeableness predicts such outcomes as relationship satisfaction, social cooperation, and safer, less aggressive driving (Cellar, Nelson, & Yorke, 2000; Fleeson, Malanos, & Achille, 2008; Graziano & Tobin, 2009; White, Hendrick, & Hendrick, 2004). Conscientiousness predicts grades in college and stronger performance motivation (setting attainable goals and pursuing them), whereas Neuroticism is linked to lower grades and greater levels of depression in college students adjusting to stressful demands of college life (Cheng & Ickes, 2009; Hutchinson & Williams, 2007; Judge & Ilies, 2002; Kappe & van der Flier, 2010; Poropat, 2009). Conscientiousness also predicts health and longevity, perhaps because more conscientious people tend to engage in healthier behaviors and to adopt healthier lifestyles (Deary, Batty, Pattie, & Gale, 2008; Kern & Friedman, 2008; Roberts, Smith, Jackson, & Edmonds, 2009). Investigations examining the utility of the Big Five model in predicting brand preferences or choices remain lacking. The general purpose of the present investigation was to examine relationships between consumer personality traits based on the Big Five model and choice of laptop computers between two competing types of computers with distinctive brand identities—Macs versus PCs. Although the designation "PC" does not represent a particular computer brand, it is associated with the Microsoft Windows operating system used by many computer companies which are in direct competition with the Apple brand of computers.

The present study also examined how college-age consumers rated these competing products on product-related attributes. This study had the advantage of comparing personalities of Mac and PC user groups based on actual product choices, rather than relying on questionnaire ratings of brand preferences. The study was conducted in the context of a laptop distribution program in which incoming undergraduate students selected either a Mac or a PC at their point of entry into college. We also examined explicit and implicit attitudes toward these competing consumer brands. Finally, we explored whether Big Five personality traits mapped onto values these student consumers placed on various product characteristics in determining their product choice.

METHOD

Sample

One hundred eight introductory psychology students, 28 males and 80 females, at a large, Northeastern, urban, Catholic university participated in the study in partial fulfillment of a course requirement. The sample comprised 92 freshmen and 16 sophomores. The self-identified racial composition of the sample was as follows: 34 Caucasians, 25 African Americans, 22 Asians, 15 Hispanics or Latinos, 10 multiracial students, and 2 other categories. The university provided laptop computers to all entering freshman that they could retain throughout their college careers and assume full ownership once they graduated.

Students were offered a choice of either a PC-type laptop (Lenovo ThinkPad) or an Apple laptop (MacBook) upon entry to college. Although costs for the laptops were folded into student tuition fees, students selecting Macs were required to pay an additional one-time $400 Macintosh program fee. Forty six students in our sample had selected a Mac and 62 had selected a PC upon entry to college, thus providing a means of

distinguishing between two groups of consumers on the basis of actual brand selections.

Measures

We used paper-and-pencil questionnaires to measure personality traits, brand ratings of Mac and PC brand identities, and rankings of factors determining laptop choices. The measure of the Big Five personality traits was the NEO Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI; Costa & McCrae, 1992b), a 60-item questionnaire with good internal consistency. We examined attitudes toward respective computer brand identities (Mac and PC) by having participants rate both brand identities on the following 13 characteristics: attractive styling, reasonably priced, reliable, cool, good for gaming, youthful, good for homework, good for social networking, good for Internet surfing, easy to use, good customer service, good features, and exciting. Participants rated each characteristic using a 7-point scale that was anchored by the endpoints 1 = "strongly disagree" and 7 = "strongly agree." To control for possible order effects, we counterbalanced the order of presentation of the brand-rating questionnaire, such that half of the participants rated Macs first and PCs second and the other half rated PCs first and Macs second. Finally, participants rank-ordered the following characteristics in terms of their relative importance in determining their choice of either a PC or Mac computer: cost, reliability, ease of use, customer service, and style.

We measured implicit attitudes toward Macs and PCs by using the Implicit Association Test (IAT), a widely used measure of implicit attitudes with established predictive validity (Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998; Greenwald, Poehlman, Uhlmann, & Banaji, 2009). The IAT is based on the assumption that categorization of targets will be easier (and thus faster) when they are paired with an evaluative category consistent with the person's underlying attitudes than when they are paired with an incongruent category. Recent evidence supports the use of the IAT in examining consumer behavior processes, including predicting explicit brand recognition and consumer attitudes and preferences (Brunel, Tietje, & Greenwald, 2004; Dimofte, 2010; Greenwald, Poehlman, Uhlmann, & Banaji, 2009; Maison, Greenwald, & Bruin, 2004; Nevid, 2010; Steinman & Karpinski, 2008).

The targets in the current study were photographic images of Macs and PCs that were obtained from a Google image search. There were four images each of Macs and PCs, and each image displayed a computer at different angles. In each image, the name of the brand (i.e., "Mac" or "PC") was displayed next to the computer. All of the images were 2.25 inches in height and ranged from 2.25 to 3.5 inches in width. The targets were paired with positive and negative evaluative categories in one IAT (Pleasant-IAT) and with self and other categories (to measure implicit self-identification) in another IAT (Self-IAT).

Procedures

Participants took part in the study in partial fulfillment of a research participation requirement for students in introductory psychology courses. In the first part of the study, participants completed paper-and-pencil measures assessing demographic information, personality traits, and explicit ratings of computer brands. In the second part of the study, which was scheduled one to two weeks later, students completed two IAT protocols, the Pleasant-IAT and a Self -IAT. We counterbalanced the order of the two IAT protocols across participants.

In completing the IAT, students sat at a desk in front of a desktop computer in a private office. We presented the IAT on the computer screen using Inquisit software and instructed participants to assign each stimulus object to one of two categories (i.e., single categorization) or one of four categories (i.e., combined categorization). Participants used either the "E" key or the "I" key on the keyboard to categorize stimuli. The IAT procedure involved five blocks of tasks: block 1, single categorization of attributes (e.g., self–other; pleasant–unpleasant); block 2, single categorization for target stimuli (e.g., PC-Mac); block 3, combined categorization of attributes and target stimuli (Mac-pleasant vs. PC-unpleasant, or *vice versa*); block 4, single categorization for target stimuli (PC-Mac or Mac-PC) but with target categories placed on opposite sides of the screen as compared to block 2; and block 5, combined categorization task with the reversed categorization of target categories (PC-pleasant vs. Mac-unpleasant, or *vice versa*).

Computation of D-scores was based on established procedures (Greenwald & Farnham, 2000; Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998). Only trials from the two test blocks (Block 3 and Block 5) were included in computation of D-scores. All trials with latencies faster than 300 milliseconds were recoded to 300 milliseconds, and all trials with latencies slower than 3000 milliseconds were recoded to 3000 milliseconds. The response latencies of error trials (e.g., categorizing a "self" word in the "other" category) were replaced with an adjusted score of 400 milliseconds above the participant's block mean. Response latencies were thus averaged across test blocks.

In computing the D-score, the mean latency of one test block is first subtracted from the mean latency of the other test block. The difference score is then divided by the standard deviation of latencies in both blocks. For the Pleasant-IAT D-score, the latency score for the condition in which Macs were paired with unpleasant words and PCs with pleasant words was subtracted from the latency scores for the reverse arrangement. In computing the Self- IAT D-score, the latency score when Macs were paired with "other" words and PCs with "self" words was subtracted from the latency score for the reverse arrangement. Thus, positive D-scores on the Pleasant- and Self-IATs were keyed to indicate favorable implicit attitudes and greater self-identification toward Macs relative to PCs.

RESULTS

Preliminary analysis of demographic characteristics revealed no significant differences between Mac and PC users with respect to gender, year in school, or race/ethnicity.

Personality Measures and Brand Choice

We failed to find any significant differences between user groups in Big Five personality traits (ps > 0.05) as measured by the NEO-FFI. A multiple logistic regression between user groups likewise failed to demonstrate a significant function based on a linear composite of the five factors, χ^2 (5, $N = 108$) = 9.18, $p = 0.10$. Conscientiousness did emerge as a significant predictor in the composite function with higher scores predictive of PC ownership, $B = 0.047$, SE $B = 0.023$, $p < 0.05$. However, the size of effect was marginal (odds ratio of 1.05) and absent significant zero-order correlations between user groups and individual Big Five factors, it does not appear that the personality measures yielded any meaningful differences between Mac and PC users.

Brand Ratings

We computed a series of repeated measures analyses with one between-subjects factor (user group, Mac vs. PC) and one within-subjects factor (brand ratings of PCs and Macs). Means and standard deviations of brand ratings is show in Table 1. Due to the large number of comparisons, we used a protected alpha level of 0.01.

Students overall favored Macs across a wide range of characteristics, including attractive style, $F(1, 106) = 198.56$, $p < 0.001$; cool, $F(1, 106) = 136.47$, $p < 0.001$; youthful, $F(1, 106) = 80.17$, $p < 0.001$; and exciting, $F(1, 106) = 142.28$, $p < 0.001$. Students favored PCs on the following characteristics: reasonably priced, $F(1, 106) = 425.18$, $p < 0.001$, and good for gaming, $F(1, 106) = 8.41$, $p < 0.01$. Several significant interaction effects emerged, showing that for some characteristics, brand owners rated their own brands higher. Mac owners rated Macs higher and PC owners rated PCs higher on the following characteristics: reliability, $F(1, 106) = 28.69$, $p < 0.001$; good for homework, $F(1, 106) = 31.04$, $p < 0.001$; easy to use, $F(1, 106) = 17.02$, $p < 0.001$; good for Internet surfing, $F(1, 106) = 13.24$, $p < 0.001$; and good features, $F(1, 106) = 12.38$, $p < 0.01$. For ratings of good customer service, PC owners rated PCs significantly higher, $F(1, 106) = 9.12$, $p < 0.01$, but user groups did not differ significantly in rating Macs on this characteristic. Conversely, for good social networking, Mac owners rated Macs higher than did PC owners, $F(1, 106) = 10.00$, $p < 0.01$, but groups did not differ significantly when rating PCs.

Factors Influencing Brand Choice

Participants ranked five product attributes using a 1 to 5 scale on their relative importance in determining their choice of laptop brands, with 1 representing the most important factor and 5 representing the least important factor. The five attributes were cost, reliability, ease of use, customer service, and style. We compared user groups on the average rankings of each factor. The results demonstrated that PC owners placed greater importance on cost, $t(103) = 5.38$, $p < 0.001$ (for PC owners, $M = 2.27$, SD = 1.31; for Mac owners, $M = 3.71$, SD = 1.42). Mac owners placed a greater emphasis on style, $t(103) = 5.50$, $p < 0.001$ (for Mac owners, $M = 2.73$, SD = 1.48; for PC owners, $M = 4.13$, SD = 1.127). No other significant differences in mean rank values were obtained.

Table 1. Ratings of Macs and PCs across Mac and PC Owners.

	Ratings of Macs Mean (SD)		Ratings of PCs Mean (SD)	
Attribute	Mac Owners	PC Owners	Mac Owners	PC Owners
Attractive style	6.63 (0.49)	6.61 (0.91)	4.63 (1.14)	4.65 (1.19)
Reasonably priced	3.15 (1.45)	2.81 (1.44)	6.15 (0.70)	6.39 (0.61)
Reliable	6.07 (1.10)	5.24 (1.22)	4.54 (1.39)	5.81 (1.21)
Cool	6.24 (0.90)	6.16 (1.04)	4.26 (1.08)	4.65 (1.13)
Good for gaming	4.57 (1.53)	4.69 (1.64)	5.30 (1.33)	5.32 (1.18)
Youthful	6.04 (0.97)	5.95 (1.34)	4.09 (1.41)	4.35 (1.27)
Good for homework	5.65 (1.22)	4.90 (1.28)	5.41 (1.20)	6.18 (0.93)
Good for social networking	6.13 (1.07)	5.60 (1.26)	5.20 (1.17)	5.45 (1.10)
Good for Internet surfing	6.20 (0.96)	5.69 (1.18)	5.20 (1.17)	5.66 (.99)
Easy to use	5.24 (1.59)	3.92 (1.90)	5.63 (1.55)	6.44 (1.08)
Good customer service	5.20 (1.46)	4.68 (1.30)	4.46 (1.57)	5.27 (1.33)
Good features	6.52 (0.59)	6.06 (1.05)	4.48 (1.38)	5.19 (1.14)
Exciting	6.26 (0.91)	5.97 (1.44)	3.57 (1.49)	4.02 (1.55)

Note: Mac users, $n = 46$; PC users, $n = 62$; response scale ranged from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree.

Table 2. Correlations between Big Five Personality Factors and Mean Rankings of Determinants of Computer Choice.

	Determinants of Computer Choice				
Personality Factor	Cost	Reliability	Ease of Use	Customer Service	Style
Neuroticism	− 0.204*	0.053	0.263**	− 0.025	0.034
Extraversion	0.029	0.067	− 0.114	− 0.108	0.078
Openness	− 0.006	− 0.193*	− 0.006	0.007	0.203*
Agreeableness	− 0.031	− 0.055	− 0.109	0.054	0.095
Conscientiousness	0.030	− 0.019	− 0.135	0.013	0.068

*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$.

Personality Traits in Relation to Determinants of Brand Choice

We examined relationships between Big Five personality factors and rankings of factors determining brand choice (see Table 2). Neuroticism was associated with greater importance placed on cost, $r(103) = -0.204$, $p < 0.05$, and lesser importance placed on ease of use, $r(103) = 0.263$, $p < 0.01$. Openness to Experience was associated with greater importance placed on reliability, $r(103) = -0.193$, $p < 0.05$, and lesser importance placed on style, $r(103) = 0.203$, $p < 0.05$. None of the other comparisons were significant.

Implicit Measures

Preliminary analysis revealed one outlier (D-score 3 SDs above the mean on the Pleasant-IAT). Consequently, the highest and lowest D-scores on the Pleasant-IAT were windsorized. Measures of favorability (D-Pleasant) and self-identification (D-Self) were moderately correlated, $r(108) = 0.42$, $p < 0.001$.

Significant differences emerged between Mac and PC users on D-scores for both the Pleasant-IAT, $t(106) = 2.58$, $p < 0.05$, and the Self-IAT, $t(106) = 2.18$, $p < 0.05$. Specifically, Mac owners had significantly more favorable implicit attitudes toward Macs on the Pleasant-IAT (Mac owners, $M = 0.34$, SD = 0.49; PC owners, $M = 0.10$, SD = 0.45) and stronger implicit self-identification with Macs on the Self-IAT (Mac owners, $M = 0.35$, SD = 0.51; PC owners, $M = 0.13$, SD = 0.53). Interestingly, examination of mean D-scores among both Mac and PC owners were in the positive range, indicative of more positive attitudes toward Macs and stronger self-identification with Macs overall, although the D-scores for PC owners were of negligible size.

D-scores were significantly correlated with explicit ratings of Macs and PCs. Using a protected alpha of 0.01, we found that D-scores on the Pleasant-IAT (indicative of more favorable implicit attitudes toward Macs) were significantly related to more positive ratings of Macs on explicit measures of reliable and ease of use (ps < 0.01). D-scores on the Pleasant-IAT were significantly but negatively related to explicit ratings of PCs on the following characteristics (ps < 0.01): reliable, good for Internet surfing, easy to use, and good features. D-scores on the Self-IAT (indicative of stronger implicit self-identification with MACs) were significantly, but negatively related to explicit ratings of PCs on the attribute of good features ($p < 0.01$).

DISCUSSION

The general personality traits represented by the Big Five model failed to differentiate between Mac and PC owners. This study had the advantage of comparing actual brand users from similar demographic backgrounds who had selected these brands of laptop computers upon entry to college. Our results are thus not consistent with a personality-based categorization of ownership groups ("I'm a Mac" vs. "I'm a PC") represented in television commercial advertising. In our sample, Mac users did not differ from PC users in Neuroticism, Openness to New Experiences, Extraversion, Agreeableness, or Conscientiousness. These negative results on personality differences between owners of competing laptop brands using a contemporary personality model (the Big Five) is consistent with the those of the much earlier review by Kassarjian (1971) of equivocal relationships between personality and consumer behavior based on the then prevailing models of personality. In the earlier review, some studies showed strong relationships, some reported no relationships, whereas the majority of studies showed relationships that were weak and of questionable value to marketers.

Although researchers have not clearly differentiated the personalities of users of different brands, personality traits may play a more nuanced role in relation to brand preferences. In our study, although PC and Mac users were not distinguishable in terms of Big Five personality traits, these personality traits were associated with judged importance consumers placed on determinants of their choice of computer brands. In particular, higher levels of Neuroticism were associated with more importance placed on cost and less importance placed on ease of use. The trait of Neuroticism is linked to proneness to anxiety, worry, guilt, and emotional instability. Students who are generally more prone to anxiety and worry may be more concerned about their finances and thus more cost conscious when purchasing a computer. Conversely, lower levels of Neuroticism (greater emotional stability) were linked

to more emphasis placed on the usability ("easy to use") in determining brand choice. We also found that the Big Five factor of Openness to Experience was related to greater emphasis on reliability and less emphasis on style. People who are high in Openness tend to be more imaginative, intellectually curious and open to nontraditional values. They may be less swayed by popular conceptions of style in making brand choices and more focused on how a particular product performs (reliability).

We also demonstrated that user groups differed in how they rated the respective brands. Students overall showed more favorable attitudes toward Macs on a number of factors relating to youthful or stylish appeal. They viewed Macs as more attractively styled, cool, youthful, and exciting than PCs. PCs received higher scores on "reasonably priced" and "good for gaming." When we examined factors related to usability, however, brand ownership was generally associated with higher ratings of one's own brand (Mac owners rating Macs higher and PC owners rating PCs higher). Students rated their own brands higher on reliability, good for homework, ease of use, and good features. In addition, PC owners rated customer service higher for PCs than Macs, whereas Mac owners rated Macs higher on social networking. It appears that Mac owners give higher ratings to their brand choice on factors relating to styling/youthful appeal and usability, whereas PC owners give the nod to Mac on styling/youthful appeal, but favor their own brand on factors relating to usability. These results suggest that PC owners may be willing to look beyond styling, coolness, and youthfulness in favor of usability in determining their computer brand preferences.

The present study showed additional evidence supporting the predictive validity of the IAT with respect to consumer preferences. Mac users showed significantly more favorable implicit attitudes toward Macs, and stronger implicit self-identification with Macs, than did PC users. By contrast, PC users demonstrated significantly less favorable implicit attitudes toward Macs as well as significantly weaker self-identification with Macs. We have no basis for knowing whether these more favorable implicit attitudes toward Macs predated purchase decisions, or whether using Macs influenced implicit attitudes in a favorable direction. However, it appears that implicit attitudes can be useful in discriminating between groups of purchasers of different computer products.

We also found that implicit attitudes predicted consumer ratings of a number of product attributes. Specifically, more positive implicit attitudes toward Macs were associated with higher brand ratings of Macs on factors of reliability and ease of use and lower ratings of PCs on factors of reliability, good for Internet surfing, ease of use, and good features. These results thus provide additional support for the validity of IAT measures in predicting explicit consumer brand ratings. However, the Self-IAT (keyed to stronger self-identification with Macs) yielded only one significant correlate—more negative explicit ratings of PCs on good features. It may be that implicit self-identification is not as closely aligned with explicit ratings of product features as implicit favorability.

One limitation of the current study is that students who selected Mac computers for the laptop distribution program were required to pay an extra $400 fee. Thus, computer brand choice of students may be partially reflective of financial ability; those who selected a PC may have been influenced more by cost than features. It is conceivable that personality differences between Mac and PC users may have emerged if the respective costs of the two brands were held constant. However, the cost differential in our study mirrors that in the general marketplace in which Macs are generally priced many hundreds of dollars more than comparably equipped PCs. Another potential limitation is that the majority of the students were freshmen and had only received their computer several months prior to the study. It is possible that length of ownership of a computer may influence consumer ratings of the product, such that the longer consumers own a particular brand, the more positive (or negative) they may tend to rate it. Finally, it is conceivable that personality traits not represented by the Big Five model may play a more direct role in distinguishing between PC and Mac owners.

There are undoubtedly many factors that determine a consumer's choice of a particular computer brand, including price, peer and expert reviews, and perceived usability or utility. Although our results did not support an "I'm a Mac" versus "I'm a PC" personality type as a determinant of brand choice, marketers may benefit from a better understanding of relationships between personality factors and features consumers find most salient in determining brand preferences and purchase decisions. In our study, individual variations in personality traits emerged in the context of the values that student consumers placed on factors underpinning their choices of laptop computer brands.

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