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**Internal and External Views of the Corporate
Reputation in the Japanese Hotel Industry**

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Abstract

Brand Personality is one way to evaluate the reputation of a business, by assessing how and in what way brand is recognized both internally and externally. Here “identity” is defined as what the employees think of the business and “image” is what the customers think of the business. In many Reputation models identity and image are thought of as being linked together and mutually dependent. If there is a causal link then the perception of customer facing employees may influence that of customers. In this study the perceptions of customers and employees in a number of ‘hot spring’ hotels in Japan are assessed using a brand personality scale. Identity and image are found to correlate, confirming previous studies in different cultures and suggesting ways in which reputation can be influenced. .

Introduction

Today the discussion about company brand has intensified and its full importance is starting to be recognized. In many companies the subject has become how to build the company brand and how to maintain and increase such a company asset. Brand Personality scales assess a brand's image using human characteristics to describe the brand. The purpose of this paper is to measure the image with regards to the outside system (customers) and to the inside system (employees). Empirical work is reported from a study of the five lodging facilities that represent the Asari Gawa Onsen, a hot spring resorts in the north of Japan. Hokkaido possesses three primary volcanic mountain groups. Consequently, more than two hundred hot springs can be found throughout the prefecture. Many have outdoor baths (rotenburo) where you can enjoy the beautiful natural surroundings while soaking in the baths.

This paper will investigate how the users of Asari Gawa Onsen view the image of the five lodging facilities and how the employees of these facilities view these same lodging facilities as well. This work aims to verify if previous work (Davies et al 2000) can be applied to a different context in a different society. In addition, the cause of how a gap has occurred between image and identity will be investigated.

Literature Review:

Brand Personality Measurement was first theoretically and practically established by the researcher J.L. Aaker with her brand personality scale, Aaker (1997). Aaker's work was extended to include studies in other cultures, where it was found that different dimensions of brand personality were more relevant than in the original study in Aaker et al (2000). With this research it was found that

Americans and Japanese recognize the factors “Sincerity”, “Excitement”, “Competence”, “Sophistication” in common with each other. It was also discovered that Americans uniquely recognize “Ruggedness” and Japanese culture uniquely recognizes “Peacefulness” as a factor. The table below shows the Brand Personality factors that are recognized by the Japanese. Davies et al (1999) extended the measurement of brand personality to measure not only customers’ views but also the views of employees. Their scale, validated in the UK is relevant to both image and identity. 7 factors, “Agreeableness”, “Enterprise”, “Competence”, “Chic”, “Ruthlessness”, “Machismo” and “Informality” were extracted. The same factor formation came from both the customers and employees. Due to this fact, this method has the logical backing of being able to compare and evaluate both the customers and employees opinion of the business.

With this scale it is possible for businesses to compare image and identity and investigate what elements they are lacking in and then concretely see how they (the employees and customers) are connected.

Table 1 Research on Brand Personality

Researcher	Criteria	Dimension
M.R. Barrick and M.K. Mount (1991)	Human Personality	1. Extroversion 2. Agreeable 3. Conscientiousness 4. Neuroticism 5. Openness to Experience
J.L. Aaker (1997)	Brand Personality (USA Model)	1. Sincerity 2. Excitement 3. Competence

		4. Sophistication 5. Ruggedness
J.L. Aaker etc.(2000)	Brand personality (Japanese Model)	1. Excitement 2. Competence 3. Peacefulness 4. Sophistication 5. Sincerity
G. Davies etc.(2001)	Brand personality (UK Model)	1. Agreeableness 2. Enterprise 3. Competence 4. Chic 5. Ruthlessness 6. Machismo 7. Informality

Evaluation measurement method

A measurement method was adopted where the Aaker scale was used as a base and further personification items were added to it. The purpose for using the personification metaphor in this paper was to make the companies' images easy to recognize by perceiving them as personality traits. It is easier to understand the answer from respondents that have been asked questions in an abstract language. Conforming to previous research this paper will assume the term "image" is the organization's evaluation given from the external organization (customers) and "identity" is the organization's evaluation given from the internal organization (employees).

Hypotheses

The Aaker scale is a device, which depends on research that includes product brand and a company's evaluation, and its uses are limited to interviews of customers. However, it was proven by Davies et al's work that a similar scale can

be used in interviews of employees too. They have said there is no logical reason to stick to only the five factors that make up image and identity. Rather, they have hinted that the more factors you have the more universal the scale will become and it will change and improve the analysis frame. So, with concern to the compatibility of the 7 factors, extracted in this research, the following hypotheses were formed.

Hypothesis 1: The Aaker scale has reliability for both employees and customers.

Furthermore, because these lodging facilities are places where the customers and employees come into face to face contact with each other the following hypothesis was formed by looking at the correlation between image and identity.

Hypothesis 2: Image and identity are positively correlated.

Questionnaire Survey

The survey in which the Asari Gawa Onsen district was the object of study was carried out in the winter of 2001. A survey was carried out with 11 lodging facilities as objects. Adequate samples to compare internal and external views were obtained in 5 and the data that follows are taken from this group. Respondents were asked to assume that the lodging 'had come to life as a human being' and to rate its personality on a five point scale using the words from the

Aaker scale as modified for Japan together with other words obtained from preliminary research among customers and employees, and a search into the words used to describe Onsen in their marketing literature. The same approach was used to assess the image of the Asari Gawa Onsen (hot spring area) as a whole.

Table 2 Sample Size

	Korakuen	Musasitei	Whinkel	Classe	Marin hill	Total
Customers	118	126	147	44	148	583
Employees	15	20	7	15	12	69

Table 3 The component Variables of 7 Factors

Gorgeousness	Liveliness	Competence	Sincerity	Simplicity	Immaturity	Peacefulness
Sophisticated	Fun	Reliable	Relieved	Mild-mannered	Childlike	Feminine
Stylish	Open-minded	Masculine	Family oriented	Reserved	Immature	Kind
Elegant	Energetic	Magnificent	Thoughtful	Modest	Cute	
Romantic	Youthful	Self-composed	Sincere	Calm		
Smooth	Approachable	Reliable	Clean	Poised		
Extravagant	Active	Dependable	Warm			
Stunning	Cheerful	Tough	Truthful			
	Charming	Neat				
	Relaxed					
	Healthy					

The raw data were factor analysed with varimax rotation . Table 3 shows the components items of the 7 factors that emerged (translated from Japanese). Each factor was labelled by the author. Reliability analyses was conducted using Cronbach alpha as the key measure, Table 4. Data is shown for employees and customers separately and for each lodging.

Reliability

Table 4 Reliability score between Customer and Employee

	Total customer	Korakuen	Musasitei	Whinkel	Classe	Mari hil	Customer & employee
Gorgeousness	0.9207	0.9202	0.9243	0.9195	0.9194	0.9207	0.9216
Liveliness	0.8897	0.9035	0.8510	0.8747	0.8629	0.9203	0.8982
Competence	0.8796	0.8863	0.8676	0.8474	0.8749	0.8836	0.8529
Sincerity	0.8637	0.8916	0.8480	0.8146	0.8268	0.8703	0.8752
Simplicity	0.6974	0.7352	0.7651	0.5556	0.4412	0.7331	0.7061
Immaturity	0.6702	0.7205	0.7095	0.6128	0.6061	0.5743	0.6449
Peacefulness	0.6239	0.5623	0.6932	0.6514	0.4289	0.6373	0.6642
	Total employee	korakuen	musashitei	whinkel	classe	Mari hill	
Gorgeousness	0.9166	0.8946	0.8074	0.9345	0.9332	0.9622	
Liveliness	0.9306	0.9275	0.9027	0.9562	0.9369	0.9426	
Competence	0.7109	0.9012	0.1480	0.8560	0.8902	0.9326	
Sincerity	0.9122	0.9414	0.9085	0.9173	0.9284	0.8763	
Simplicity	0.7390	0.7846	0.8412	0.5335	0.5940	0.6403	
Immaturity	0.4887	0.5216	0.6758	-1.1429	0.3968	0.4458	
Peacefulness	0.8531	0.8931	0.7891	-1.0000	0.8527	0.9316	

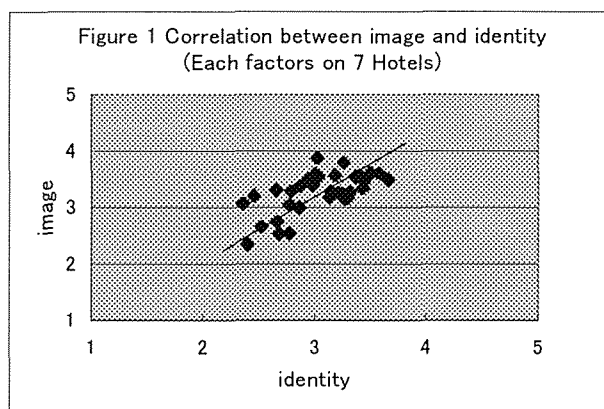
Generally if a value exceeds 0.6 or 0.7 it is considered valid. As a result, with the total customers and total employees the reliability of this analysis was proved with most of the factors. However, the analysis showed an extremely low value in relation to the total employees 『immaturity factor』. In order to find the cause of this low value, the element “immature” was taken out of the factor and reliability was measured again. In this case the reliability rose from 0.4887 to 0.6141. In short it seems there is an ambiguity in the word “immature” so there is a problem

in the way different respondents interpret this word. It seems this word has influenced the reliability with disunity.

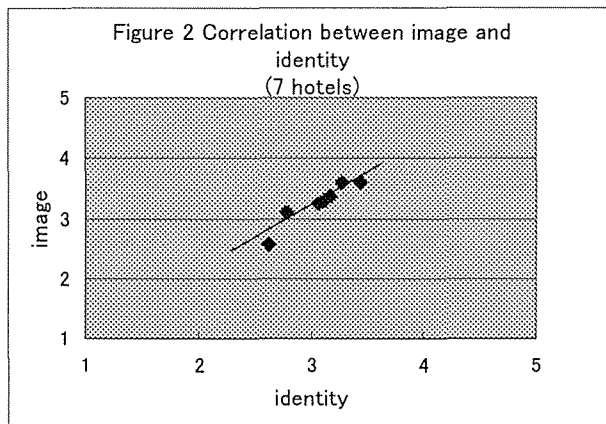
At the level of the individual hotel or lodging a few factors were found that did not satisfy the 0.6 or above score. This is especially the case with the Classe Hotel where the customers' reliability with the factors of 『simplicity』 and 『peace of mind』 showed a score of 0.4. Furthermore with regard to the employees, many of the factors showed low values, especially with Winkel where the values of 『immaturity』 and 『peace of mind』 are negative. One of the reasons is that the sample size was too small. Also, there are not enough items in the factors of 『immaturity』 and 『peace of mind』.

However from the overall data hypothesis 1 is supported.

Correlation Analysis



		identity	image
identity	Pearson' correlation		0.639
	Probability (Both)	.	0.000
	Number		35
Image	Pearson' correlation	0.639	
	Probability (Both)	0.000	.
	N	35	



		identity	Image
identity	Pearson' correlation		0.949
	Probability (Both)	.	0.001
	Number		7
Image	Pearson' correlation	0.949	.
	Probability (Both)	0.001	
	Number	7	

Correlation analysis was used and to determine whether or not there is a correlation between image and identity. The graph above is a plot of 35 pairs of scores (5 companies by 7 factors). The graph below shows the average scores of image and identity from all the customers of the 5 companies. The total average of correlation scores shows a value of 0.949 (significant at the 1% level) and shows a definite correlation, but the correlation score of each hotel was lower at 0.639(still significant at the 1% level). There is a then a definite correlation between image and identity and hypothesis 2 has been accepted.

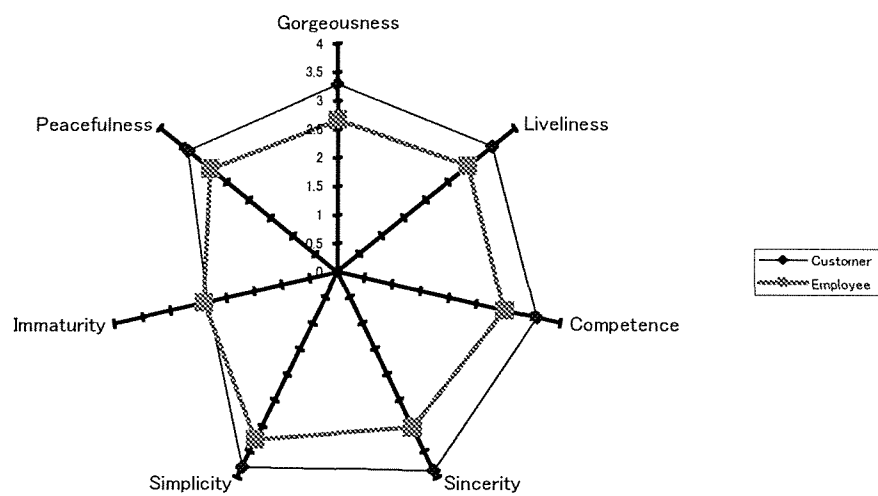
Comparison of image and identity in each Hotel.

i) Kourakuenn

Excluding the factors of “immaturity and youthfulness” the image for the Kourakuen hotel greatly exceeded its identity. The factor of “immaturity and youthfulness”, has the smallest gap of only 0.07 %. Kourakuen has a higher evaluation from it's customers than it does from its own employees. If image and

identity are linked (Davies and Chun 2002) then management need to improve their employees' feelings towards the hotel.

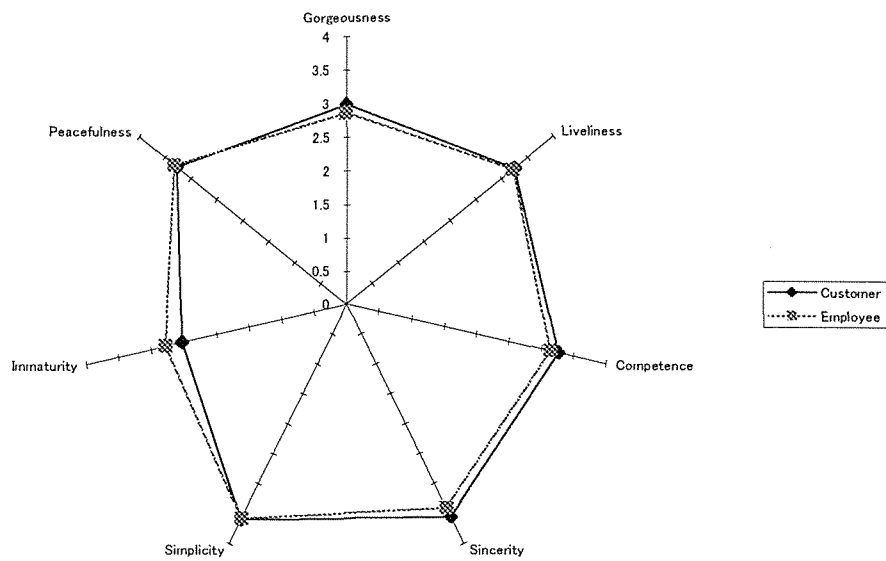
	Gorgeousness	Liveliness	Competence	Sincerity	Simplicity	Immaturity	Peacefulness
Customer	3.29362	3.48699	3.58487	3.872453	3.79104	2.331761	3.367521
Employee	2.657143	2.946667	3.008333	3.028571	3.266667	2.4	2.866667



ii) Hotel Musashi Tei

With the factors of “gorgeousness and splendoredness”, “liveliness and cheerfulness”, “capability and magnificence”, “sincerity” no big difference was apparent. With the factor of “simplicity” the employees had a higher opinion than did the customers. It seems the employees recognized their company as a ‘plain’, ‘calm’ business, while the customers didn’t feel the same way. With the factors of “immaturity and youthfulness” relief and gentleness” image had a higher value than did identity. From the point of the customers having a higher evaluation than the employees is probably a good result. However the elements that comprise the factor “immaturity and youthfulness” are , ‘childish’, ‘immature’, and ‘cute’ and so the problem remains whether the people who filled out the questionnaires considered these as positive or negative elements.

	Gorgeousness	Liveliness	Competence	Sincerity	Simplicity	Immaturity	Peacefulness
Customer	2.991637	3.253761	3.269949	3.560212	3.596229	2.5308	3.268595
Employee	2.861654	3.215263	3.14375	3.410526	3.584211	2.778947	3.315789

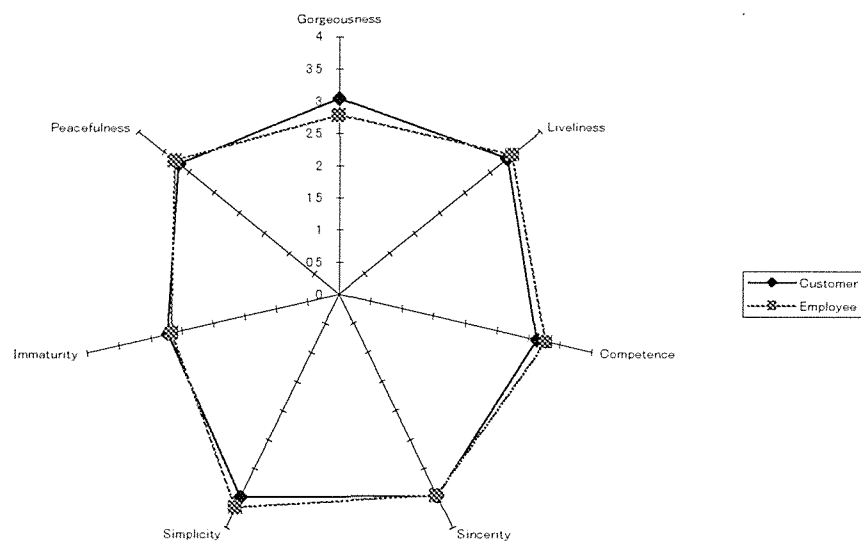


iii) Winkuru

Here most of the scores for image and identity were equal. This means that both the customers and employees gave a similar evaluation towards Winkuru. But with the factors of “gorgeousness and splendidness” one can see that a gap has formed. In this case image exceeds identity. In other words the customers see Winkuru as a more

fashionable, elegant, and fantastic place than do the employees. From now on the employees have to recognize Winkeru as a “gorgeous and splendid” place and search for a way to improve all the values from this time.

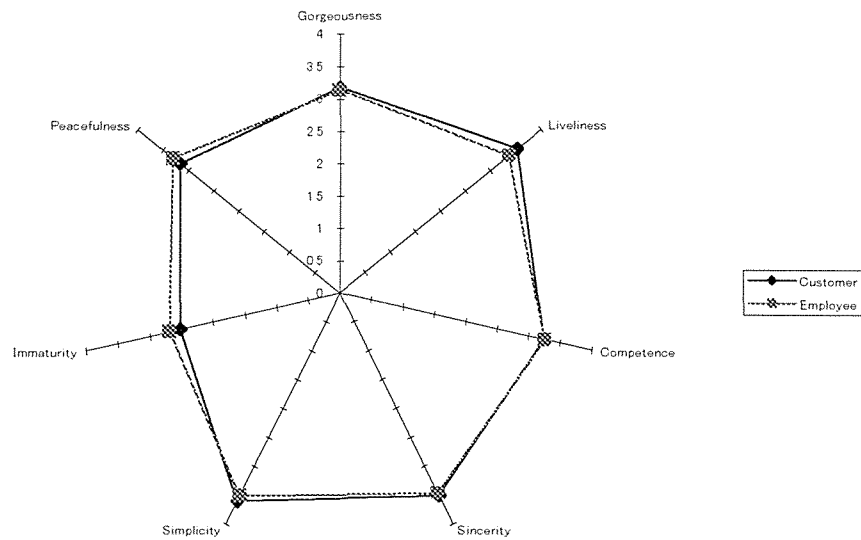
	Gorgeousness	Liveliness	Competence	Sincerity	Simplicity	Immaturity	Peacefulness
Customer	3.034014	3.335374	3.136881	3.463444	3.483796	2.732069	3.20068
Employee	2.77551	3.433333	3.270833	3.44898	3.661905	2.666667	3.285714



iv) Asari Classe Hotel

There was no real big difference between image and identity with the Asari Classe Hotel. If one difference has to be mentioned with the factors of "immaturity and youthfulness" "relief and gentleness" identity exceeds image. This means that the employees recognize their hotel as 'cute' and 'kind' more than the customers. On the other hand with the factor of "liveliness and cheerfulness" image exceeds identity. This means that the customers think the hotel is a fun and intimate place more than the employees think so. From now on the employees should recognize their hotel as having "liveliness and cheerfulness" and raise their identity and look for a strategy in which they can improve all the values.

	Gorgeousness	Liveliness	Competence	Sincerity	Simplicity	Immaturity	Peacefulness
Customer	3.170732	3.531054	3.244131	3.511203	3.597811	2.520325	3.158537
Employee	3.133333	3.366667	3.25	3.466667	3.506667	2.688889	3.3



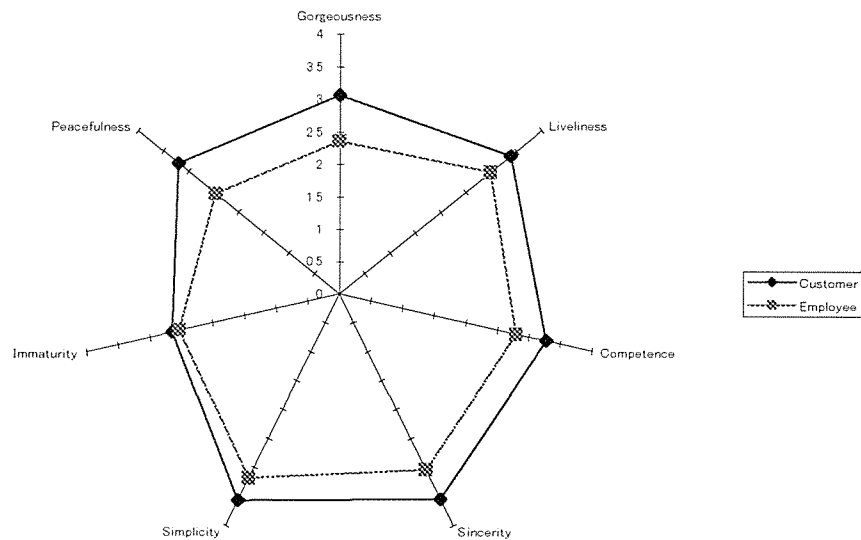
v) Marine Hill Hotel Otaru (Hokkaido Sailor Insurance, Health and Welfare Center)

At the Marine Hill Hotel Otaru with all of the factors the values of image exceeded the values of identity. This is a remarkable difference compared to the other hotel establishments. With the factors of “gorgeousness and splendidness” and “relief and gentleness” the difference between identity and image was particularly big at 0,7. The difference was at 0,5 for the factors of “liveliness and cheerfulness” ,”capability

and magnificence “ ,”sincerity” . With the factors of “simplicity”, ”immaturity and youthfulness” there was little difference between image and identity.

From the above values it is clear that the Marine Hill Hotel Otaru has a much higher evaluation from its customers than it does from its own employees. Therefore while having pride in their company and also not forgetting to be modest the employees of Marine Hill Hotel Otaru must make an effort to look for a way to maintain and improve their values for identity.

	Gorgeousness	Liveliness	Competence	Sincerity	Simplicity	Immaturity	Peacefulness
Customer	3.059256	3.380125	3.278583	3.541197	3.566068	2.643759	3.198756
Employee	2.357143	2.983333	2.791667	3.035714	3.186364	2.527778	2.458333



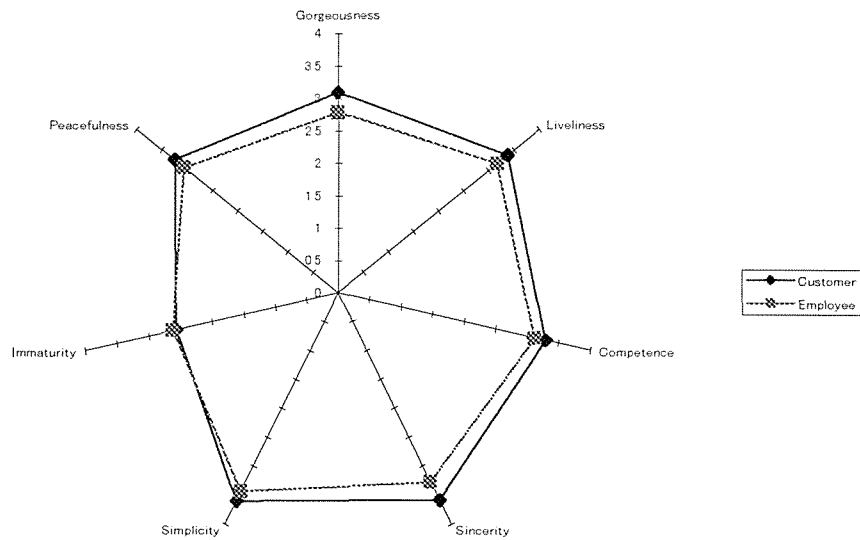
Comparison of image and identity in Asarigawa Hot spring Area

Respondents were asked to rate the hot spring area as well as the hotel they were working or staying in. For all the factors except for 'immaturity and youth' image exceeds identity. It looks like the customers have a higher regard for Asari Gawa Onsen (Hot spring) than do the employees. There is a big difference between image and identity with the factors of 'gorgeousness and magnificence' and 'sincerity'. So, it seems that the customers more than the employees feel a sense

of “warmth” and “refinedness” towards Asari Gawa Onsen. Perhaps, it is necessary for the employees to feel confident towards this evaluation from the customers and use this as the focus to decide on an improvement strategy.

Table image and identity on Asarigawa hot spring hotel.

	Gorgeousness	Liveliness	Competence	Sincerity	Simplicity	Immaturity	Peacefulness
Customer	3.094788	3.374144	3.3006	3.591055	3.599807	2.569233	3.246029
Employee	2.778955	3.16734	3.122997	3.276215	3.435458	2.620205	3.058824



Conclusions

The purpose of this paper was to measure the image and identity of Asari Gawa Onsen by using a brand personality scale and by using reliability and the correlation verify whether or not it is possible to analyze the objects of this study by the Davies's research method. As a result the reliability score and correlation were mostly as expected. The gap between image and identity was investigated

and the cause of this gap was also discussed. For individual hotels the sample size is too small to demonstrate statistically significant results but the scores and the gaps between image and identity were large enough to be of concern to some hotels. Perhaps the gaps between image and identity for the hot spring region as a whole is the most intriguing. It is possible that the customers have a glamorous image of a vacation location, but employees appear not to see the area in the same way. In the long term this could be dangerous, as customers may start to see the area in the same way?

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