

Chapter 6

SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES BRAND PERSONIFICATION

Brand communication and consumers interaction with brand in form of its usage leads to creation of certain perception about the brand. Perceived personality notions leads to formation of personality of a brand in the mind of customers, indicating a relationship between brand users and brand.

6.1 Perceptual mapping

In order to study the role of brand personification in building perception about the online social network websites, discriminant analysis has been used to identify the brand personality that user's associate with four online social networks under study. Online social network websites users were asked to reveal their preferences on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 was strongly disagree and 5 was strongly agree. Discriminant analysis generated result of four groups as four social networking sites were under study. The discriminant analysis output gave Eigen values of each function and amount of variance explained from the original data. With the help of this data principal component analysis was performed in preference mapping where a two dimensional scatter plot was created with different points in it representing the four social networking sites. The coding of different social networking sites are shown in table 6.1.

Table 6.1: Social networking sites coding

Coding	Name of online social network
1	Facebook
2	Twitter
3	Linked In
4	Google+

Table 6.2: Group statistics

SNS		Mean	Std. Deviation
Facebook	Sincere	3.3800	1.18870

	Exciting	3.7620	1.02782
	Competent	3.3510	1.14766
	Sophisticated	3.4110	1.15992
	Rugged	2.8060	1.23851
Twitter	Sincere	2.9820	1.28114
	Exciting	2.9520	1.24227
	Competent	2.9940	1.22534
	Sophisticated	2.8770	1.25117
	Rugged	3.1360	1.32486
LinkedIn	Sincere	3.1650	1.30824
	Exciting	2.9390	1.23158
	Competent	3.2530	1.22984
	Sophisticated	2.8720	1.21865
	Rugged	2.7210	1.22338
Google+	Sincere	3.1680	1.29439
	Exciting	3.0900	1.29289
	Competent	3.1070	1.30125
	Sophisticated	2.8760	1.22316
	Rugged	2.9600	1.33573
Total	Sincere	3.1738	1.27631
	Exciting	3.1858	1.24905
	Competent	3.1763	1.23433
	Sophisticated	3.0090	1.23523
	Rugged	2.9058	1.29085

Discriminant analysis was used with the help of SPSS and results are presented in tables 6.4 & 6.5. Dependent variables in this study were four online social network websites i.e. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Google+ and the data for dependent variables was collected on nominal scale. The five elements competence, sincerity, excitement, sophistication and ruggedness of brand personality were the Independent variables. The Data for these independent variables was collected on interval scale. Thus the condition of preference mapping was met and analysis was conducted.

Wilk's' lambda indicated highly significant discriminant function ($p < .000$) (table 6.3). It also offered 10.3% as amount of total unexplained variability which was the square of canonical correlation.

Table 6.3: Wilk's' Lambda

Test of Function(s)	Wilks' Lambda	Chi-square	df	Sig.
1 through 3	.870	557.293	15	.000
2 through 3	.969	124.246	8	.000
3	.998	8.695	3	.034

Four social networking sites had their unique position on the map. Using the standardized coefficients of personality elements on function 1 and 2, plot of different social networking sites has been plotted in figure 6.1 using canonical discriminant functions (Table 6.4) and functions of group centroids (Table 6.5). These functions were evaluated through group means being the unstandardized canonical discriminant functions.

Table 6.4: Canonical discriminant function coefficients

	Function		
	1	2	3
SINCERE	-.124	-.328	.810
EXCITING	.905	.452	.388
COMPETENT	-.151	-.757	-.363
SOPHISTICATED	.452	.100	-.816
RUGGED	-.485	.819	.067

Table 6.5: Functions at Group Centroids

SNS	Function		
	1	2	3
Facebook	.579	.025	-.010
Twitter	-.271	.210	-.043
LinkedIn	-.175	-.267	-.025
Google+	-.133	.032	.078

Unstandardized canonical discriminant functions evaluated at group means

As only bi-dimensional map could be drawn using this technique, only function 1 and 2 of Canonical Discriminant Function Coefficients and unstandardized canonical discriminant functions were taken into consideration which were evaluated at group means. Data was put into Microsoft Excel and a scatter plot was constructed keeping X-axis as function one and Y-axis as function two.

6.2 Social Networking Sites and brand personality elements associations

The position of different brands of social networking sites were plotted with respect to different brand personality attributes as represented in figure 6.1.

- Online social networking site Google+ and Twitter are perceived as brands carrying rugged personality. But Twitter is valued more on this personality trait as compared to Google +.
- Users associate Facebook strongly with sophistication. In the perceptual map the brand Facebook is positioned near to personality element of sophistication. Facebook is also perceived as having exciting personality by users but with lower degree of association. So Facebook is perceived to have both sophisticated and exciting personality but brand personality element sophistication is having high degree of association as compared to other one.

- LinkedIn is perceived by users as having elements of competence and sincerity. Brand personality characteristic of sincerity is perceived more strongly as compared to competence.

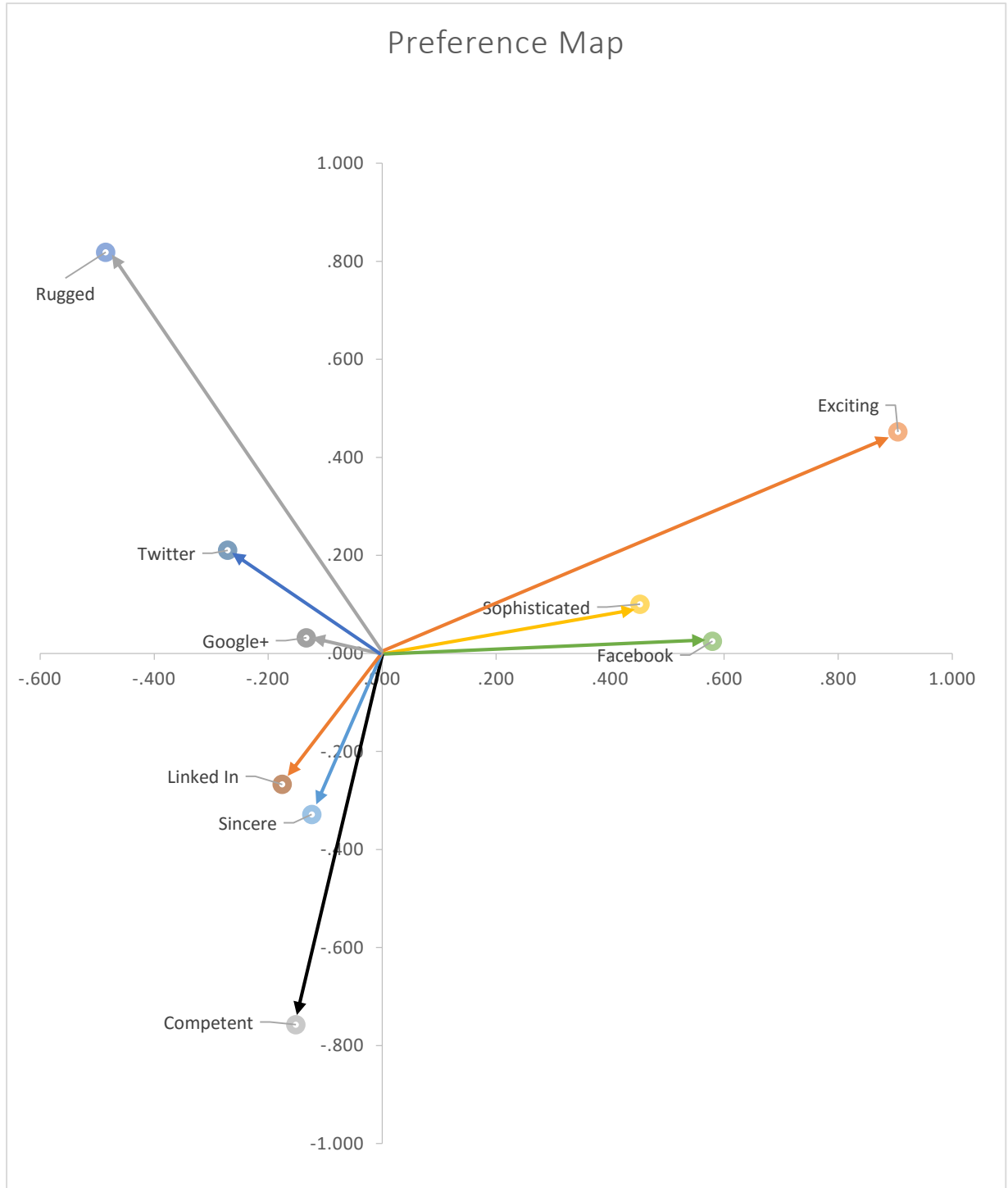


Figure 6.1: Perceptual Map of social networking sites and brand personality elements

Based on the visual information in perceptual map (Figure 6.1), the brands under study if personified, LinkedIn as a person is perceived to be sincere and competent. LinkedIn is

endorsed as a professional network for managing professional individuality and to form & participate in professional network. LinkedIn has mission statement, “connect the world's professionals to make them more productive and successful” (LinkedIn, 2014) so considering this focus of company, the sincere and competent personality of brand is adequately positioned in the mind of people. Traits associated with sincerity dimension of personality are down to earth, family orientation, honest and original etc. whereas the traits associated with competence are hardworking, reliable, intelligent and confident etc.

Google+ compiles user information across various other properties like YouTube, Google Drive etc. Google+ is being positioned as a service underlying many other services of Google Inc. Google+ is being described by Google Inc. as the “second layer” which is used to enhance its online assets (Lewix, 2014). Social networkers perceive Google+ to have personality of a rugged person. Perception of Google+ being a rugged person is a good sign for the company as it supports many of its other properties but at the same time it should also have been positioned as having competent (reliable) personality.

Mission statement of Twitter is “to instantly connect people everywhere to what is most meaningful to them”. Social networkers follow other people on Twitter and Twitter in India is marked by presence of many influential personalities from politics to cricket and business world (Stever & Lawson, 2013) (IBN live, 2014). People follow their favorite personalities on Twitter. Brand image of Twitter being a rugged person definitely meets the idea of successful people joining Twitter to connect with their fans.

Facebook is the most used online social network brand and has mission “to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected”. Crores of individuals use Facebook daily to link with friends, upload photos, share videos or links, and learn about others (Facebook, 2014). Facebook help users to represent themselves online and share content with real world friend using online mode. Basically it offers people a platform to represent themselves and their real life associations (Abram & Pearlman, 2012). The number of people who are using Facebook would remain linked to this brand if they treat Facebook as a person having exciting personality. As per the results, people perceive that Facebook is having exciting personality but this representation is not very strong. Brand personality element of sophistication (traits like upper class and glamorous) is strongly associated with Facebook. This is good brand personality positioning for Facebook which would help it to retain its existing customers and gain new customers. As more and more people are becoming

status oriented (Gopal & Srinivasan, 2006) (Kamineni, 2005), brand positioning of being a sophisticated brand will help future growth.

So based on the results we can sum the results as given below:

Table 6.6: Online social networks brand personality

Social Networking Site	User perceived positioning
Facebook	Sophistication Existing
Twitter	Rugged
LinkedIn	Sincere Competent
Google+	Rugged

Facebook based on the results is enjoying a very unique positioning in the mind of the people of being a sophisticated person. This personality perception is carried by no other online social network at the current time. This is great opportunity for Facebook to sustain this position and work more on other dimensions of personality. Increasing the strength for exciting personality perception and adding competent personality perception can make Facebook remain the market leader for a very long time in future.

Social networking sites having two personality attributes with them are Facebook and LinkedIn. On the other hand Twitter and Google+ are not seen so different by the users of online social networks.

Consumers today want to be more informed about products before they make the purchase. Most importantly, social networks are extremely capable of informing and influencing purchase decisions, as many users now trust their peer opinions more than the marketing strategists. The increasing conduciveness of people to social networking has led to fast adoption of the medium by companies for brand promotions. Brands are setting up profile on these sites, accepting SNS users as “friends”, to reach out to consumers (Sharma & Verma, 2012). Brands like Adidas, BMW and Coco-Cola have created circles of “friends” that have become brand building hubs (McKinsey, 2007). Brand managers needs to be very cautious regarding fit between brand personality of the brand being promoted via social networking site and personality of social networking site used for brand promotion. An example could be, if a brand carries an exciting personality element then it should not be

promoted using LinkedIn as the medium. On the other hand managers of social networking sites need to understand the personality perception of these sites with people and attempts should be made to match the perceived brand personality elements with the focus of company. To grow, social networking companies need to continuously work upon strengthening their personality elements and to get themselves associated with more than one personality element to appeal to larger number of audience and brands. The ultimate aim with any social networking site is to match social networker's self-concept or brand identity with the consumer perception of brand image. Facebook being positioned as a brand having sophisticated and exciting personality is enjoying marketer leader's position. Google+ is being positioned as a service underlying many other services of Google Inc. and perception of Google+ being a rugged person is a good sign for the company. On the other hand, Twitter being a rugged person definitely meets the idea of successful people joining Twitter to connect with their fans but it needs to add a perspective of sophistication to its brand to compete against the likes of Facebook. Considering the focus of company, the personality of LinkedIn brand in the mind of people is adequately positioned to be of a sincere and competent person.