

An Empirical scrutinizing of Brand Personalities: Indian Telecommunication Service Providers



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Abstract: *In research of consumer behavior, a substantial amount of interest has been given to the create brand personality which refers to the set of people distinctiveness associated with brands. even though a few explorations on recognition of personalities of brands in India, this research scrutinizing attempted with conceptualization to determine the personality of mobile telecommunication brands in India. Researchers investigated perception of consumers in India regarding the few mobile telecommunication service brands with using 200 customers as a sample. The all constructs were defined with the help of five brand personality dimensions. The scrutinizing revealed that each brand represents its own personality dimension while sharing more than one key personality factors.*

Key words: *Brand personality, competitive advantage, Mobile Telecommunication, Industry Life Cycle.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Most brands need to connect with its target customers. With in heavily competitive crowded market place each brand tries get notice and touch the hearts and souls of the customers (Chernatony 1999). Therefore brands need to go beyond its functional loyalty to emotional loyalty and brand managers must pay their attention on developing the key facets of brand. Among them development of brand personality has been taken more on brand mangers time very recently. In other words brand mangers tries to personify the brands that enable them to the touch inner feeling of customers and this has become trend in fast decades. Brand personality gives the consumer to be different and give opportunity to choose more complete version than the generic offering. A well establish brand personality can increase the longer brand loyalty and usage, recommendations and taking the big portion from the consumers mind. The lack of clear cut brand personality drive brands to the end in vibrant competitive market. Development of personality to the brand has gained attention since celebrity endorsement where consumers convinced to feel that each endorsed brands as endorser's equipments or tools.

Since then the development of personality to the brand has grown beyond that and most marketing gurus identified to create a valuable brand it should convey some certain personality dimensions what consumers are valued. In essence it is influenced on consumer behavior dramatically. Because of that considerable amount of researches are devoted to measure the personality of brand to identify its dimensions and change them according to the market or customer preferences. The understating the personalities of brands become the emerging trend among the academicians as well as practitioners. the majority researchers have focused on their awareness to how the personality of a brand enables a consumer to articulate his or her own self (Belk 1988), an ideal self (Malhotra 1988) or explicit dimensions of the self (Kleine, Kliene and Kerman 1993) through the use of brand. Till the recognition of Jennifer Aaker's (1997)¹ five dimension models there was no connotation scrutinizing done to identify the personality of brands. She mentioned that brand personality is a set of human characteristics associated with a brand (Aaker 1997)¹. Most brand personality measurement researches are based on this model and it has tested in different countries. With this situation it is identified that little research has done on identification of personality in any brand in India. Taking in to consideration of this factor this research has concerned to measure the personality of mobile communication brands in India. This has enable academicians and practitioners to identify the personality dimensions of mobile brand in India and change the marketing practices what they have followed up to now.

II. MOBILE COMMUNICATION INDUSTRY IN INDIA

The world's second-largest telecommunications market is India, with around 1,183.53 million telephone subscriber bases at the end of May 2019¹⁴. There are three segments of Indian Telecom – wireless, wire line and internet services. The wireless market segment comprises of 89.92 per cent of the total subscriber base, as of May 2019 compared to 95.90 per cent in Financial Year 2011. As of May 2019, rural subscribers form 42.9 per cent of total telephone subscribers and in April 2019 43.33 per cent, compared to 33.35 per cent in Financial Year 2011.

The second largest country in terms of internet subscribers is also India. The number of internet subscribers in the country increased at a Compound Annual Growth Rate of 41.58 per cent during Financial Year 2006- Financial Year 2018 to reach 636.73 million in 2018-19.

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The world's greatest rising market for mobile applications in the first quarter of 2018 and remained as the world's greatest increasing market for Google Play downloads in the second and third quarter of 2018. The internet customer base in India has crossed five hundred million mark and is likely to reach six hundred twenty seven million by end 2019. Total wireless data usage in India grew 119 per cent year-on-year to 1,58,50,560 terabytes between January-March 2019. Gross returns of the telecom sector stood at Rs 2,37,416.6 crore in 2018-19. Strong policy carry from the government has been crucial to the sector's development. Foreign Direct Investment cap in the telecom sector has been increased to 100 per cent from 74 per cent. Foreign Direct Investment inflows into the telecom sector during April 2000 – March 2019 totaled to Rs 2.29 lakh crore. The

operating expense on telecom infrastructure and services by Government of India grew six-fold to Rs 60,000 crore between 2014-2019. To boost the sector on a growth path, the Government of India has launched the National Digital Communications Policy, 2018, which envisages attracting reserves worth US\$ 100 billion in the telecommunications sector by 2022.

India has turn out to be a case of partial spectrum quantum accessibility and high reserve price per MHz of spectrum. There needs to be rationalization in pricing of the spectrum to be in line with the Indian consumers' ability to pay for these services and attract serious investors to invest in the business.



Below I have mentioned the list of Telecom companies in India¹³.

1 | Airtel

Airtel Corporate office – New Delhi | Airtel

Establishment – 1986 |

Airtel Core Business – Telecommunications & satellite TV | **Website** – www.airtel.in |

India's largest telecom company Bharti Airtel headquartered in New Delhi. Bharti Airtel was founded by Sunil Mittal in 1986; the company is fourth largest mobile operator in the world. Products offered includes mobile commerce, 2G, 3G and 4G wireless services, fixed line services, IPTV, high speed DSL broadband, DTH and enterprise services.

2 | Reliance Jio

Jio Corporate office – Nariman Point, Mumbai, India | **Jio**

Establishment – 2016 |

Jio Core Business – Mobile telephony, Wireless broadband, Internet services & OTT Services | **Website** – www.jio.com/

Jio is an entire network that allows Indians to live the digital life to the fullest. This network consists of dominant broadband networks, valuable applications, best-in-class services and smart devices disseminated to every doorstep in India. Jio's media offerings include the most inclusive libraries and programmes of recorded and live music, sports, live and catch up television, movies and events. Jio is about

creating linked astuteness for 6 billion universal minds to unleash the power of a young nation.

3 | Tata docomo

Docomo Corporate office – New Delhi | **Docomo Establishment** – 2008 |

Docomo Business – Telecommunication sector | **Website** – www.tatadocomo.com |

Docomo providing cellular service on the GSM, CDMA and platform. Docomo is the top telecom companies in India and the first Indian telecom company to launch 3G services in India.

4 | Vodafone

Vodafone Corporate office – London, United Kingdom |

Vodafone Establishment – 1991 |

Vodafone Business – Telecommunications | **Website** – www.vodafone.in |

Vodafone is a foremost global telecommunications company with operations in over thirty countries. It's Headquarter in London, the company ranks amongst the top 4 telecom companies globally in terms of subscribers and revenues. Vodafone is having 45% of Verizon Wireless, which is the largest mobile telecom company in the United State measured by subscribers.

5 | Idea

Idea Corporate office – Mumbai, Maharashtra | **Idea Establishment** – 1995 |

Idea Business – Telecommunications | **Website** – www.ideacellular.com |

Idea Cellular Company is with over 121 million customers. Idea is India among of the top 5 telecom companies which is offering 2G, 3G and 4G services with traffic of about 1.5 billion minutes a day.

6 | MTNL

MTNL Corporate office – New Delhi | **MTNL**

Establishment – 1986 |

MTNL Business – Telecommunications | **Website** – www.mtnl.net.in |

MTNL is an publicly owned Indian telecommunications company whose headquartered is in New Delhi. Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited provides services in New Delhi and Mumbai in India and Mauritius in Africa. It was built-in in the year 1986.

7 | Aircel

Aircel Corporate office – Chennai, Tamilnadu | **Aircel**

Establishment – 1999 |

Aircel Business – Telecommunications | **Website** – www.aircel.com |

Aircel group facilitate messaging, wireless voice and data services in India. It is a joint venture between Sindya Securities & Investments Pvt. and Maxis Communications.

8 | MTS

MTS Corporate office – New Delhi |

MTS Establishment – 2008 |

MTS Business – Telecommunications | **Website** – www.mtsindia.in |

Mobile Tele Systems is a subsidiary of Sistema a Russian conglomerate. MTS facilitates wireless voice, messaging, broadband Internet and data services in Indian Market. It has more than 16 million customers.

9 | Uninor

Uninor Corporate office – Gurgaon, India | **Uninor**

Establishment – 2009 |

Uninor Business – Telecommunications | **Website** – www.uninor.in |

Uninor is an Indian based mobile service provider based in Gurugram. Uninor is a part of Telenor Group of companies offering mobile data and voice services based on the Global System of Mobile communication platform. The Uninor company has over three crore subscribers in Goa, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and Maharashtra.

10 | BSNL

BSNL Corporate office – New Delhi | **BSNL**

Establishment – 2000 |

BSNL Business – Telecommunications | **Website** – www.bsnl.co.in |

BSNL is a state-owned telecommunications service provider established on 15 September 2000. BSNL is the fourth largest mobile telecom service provider and biggest provider of fixed telephony in India.

III. RESEARCH PROBLEM AND OBJECTIVES

In Indian context, most of brand mangers pay their attention to development of strong brands to obtain competitive

advantages in the market place. And they have also recognized that the strong brand is one of the main weapons to survive in the vibrant competitive market. It is similar lesson for mobile communication service providers. Even market consists of few key players; they try to develop their brand with giving more experience to the customers. However with current situation, it can be identified little research done on measuring personalities of any mobile communication brands in India. Therefore, this scrutinizing initially focused on assessing the brand personalities of mobile communication service brands in India. Specifically, the aims of this scrutinizing were to,

- Examine the positions of Indian mobile communication brands in terms of brand personalities.
- Determine whether respondents could differentiate mobile communication brands on the basis of brand personality

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

Personality can be defined as unique stable set of behavior that one person shows from other with considering the environmental as well as social factors. Under human psychology it is accepted that human persona is the “unique, dynamic organization of distinctiveness of a scrupulous person, physical and psychological, which influence behavior and responses to the societal and substantial surroundings” (Liebert and Spiegler 1998, p. 5). Other researchers have come out with personality as individual unique and relatively stable pattern of behavior thoughts and emotions (Burger 1990 Corver & Scheier 1992; Wallace 1993). Various theorists come out with various concepts and models to explain the human personality. Under that Trait theory took greater attention due to better definition and applicability in Psychology as well as later in marketing literature. The theory of traits have suggested by the Allport and Odbert in 1936 (Psychology 3rd edition 480 pages Baron A Robert). However with the help of traits most theorists in psychology define the personality and among them Goldberg’s (1990) big five has gain tremendous attention. These five represent the acronym OCEAN and which represents Openness, Consciousness, Extroversion, Agreeableness and Neuroticism. With the help of psychology marketing theorist and researchers come out various consumer base researches. It is well thought-out that brands like human can be described with traits and have personalities. (Plummer, 1984). Advertisers and marketing practitioners were the first ones to devise the term ‘brand personality, well before the academic studied and accepted the concept. (Caprar and Audery 2001)⁵ marketers determine brands personality thinking brand as a person. In the quest to create idiosyncratic products and services marketers have sought to impart their brands with human like characteristics or brand personalities (Siguwa et al., 1999). It is acknowledged that customers prefer definite brand to show individual identity or his self concept. But these five factors measured in Psychology essentially didn’t help to measure the traits of brand. More in recent times, Caprara et al (2000) found that

Big Five model of human personality to brand personality traits could not be replicated in the circumstance of brands (Sweeney and Brandson 2006). There was no acceptable method to measure the personality of brand until Aakers model. With considering these facts well known researcher Jenifer Aaker introduce a theory to measure the personality of any brand and it has taken the greater attention of marketing literature. She claimed that brand personality is dissimilar from human personality where human personality is understood through behavior, physical uniqueness, attitudes and beliefs; whereas brand personality is generated through the contact the consumer has with the brand. J.Aaker (1997, p 348)¹. According to the Aaker brand personality can be defined as set of human characteristics associate with brands (Aaker j, 1997)¹. She proposed five dimensions to compute the personality of a brand which are Sincerity, Excitement, Competence Sophistication and Ruggedness. She developed five point scales to measure these five traits and initially she utilized the 114 traits that she reduced them in to 42. She began it by qualitative scrutinizing and done nationwide survey to measure the traits across ninty brands that were cautiously selected to signify the broad assortment of product and services. However there are several arguments on the Aakers five dimensions where other come out with that brand personality should contain more than those positive traits. Brand personality should include demographic features such as gender, social class and age (Caprar 2001)⁵. Further he says dimensions such as cost-effective, suitable and famed should add to that. Despite these things the theory developed by the Aaker is widely accepted by the researchers and most of brand personality measurements are based on it. Despite these misgivings, Aaker’s scale has been deployed in a range of industries (Siguaw et al., 1999)³ and cultural context (Aaker et al., 2001)⁴. Researchers whom have utilized Aaker’s brand personality tool have claimed that it is a useful tool for diagnosing brand personality with a view towards afterward improving the alliance between purchaser insight and desired zymology (Siguaw et al., 1999; Deane et al., 2003).

Lastly brand managers need to recognize the brand personality position sequentially for effective brand management. However, the previous research studies have analyzed the brand personalities in different brand categories and cultures. It is believed that in Indian context comprehensive studies have not yet been conducted to examine the personality of mobile communication brands. Therefore this scrutinizing was carried out to determine the personalities of mobile communication brands based on Aaker’s five dimension models.

Exhibit 1

Brand Personality dimension and traits

V. METHODOLOGY

In point of fact, this scrutinizing is approximately an empirical one. So, effort was made to gather primary data. In that context, a detailed questionnaire was administrated. The primary research was carried out in different Universities of India and data was collected from undergraduates who are currently using at least one mobile phone. Additionally, secondary data were also utilized for conceptualization and understanding the background of the scrutinizing through textbooks, different articles of journals and relevant web sites etc. Here again we restricted to the Commerce and Management Faculty where the student population is approximately two thousand. From each academic year researchers have obtained fifty students and sampling frame was student index number sheets. It was accepted that university students represent the vast geographical area in India. Likert-scale Questionnaire (range from 5-all descriptive to 1-least descriptive) was distributed among students to allocating special time slot for them and each student is paid hundred rupees for the representation. Total of 200 questionnaires distributed among the students in four different time slots. In here respondents are assumed to use at least one mobile service and even who do not have experience in other service providers are asked to rank them based on the company communication and their service level perceived by them. For each four brands questionnaire was distributed while giving instructions to them.

Exhibit- 02.

| Competence | Sincerity | Excitement | Sophistication on Ruggedness | Competence |
|--------------|-----------------|--------------|------------------------------------|------------|
| Reliable | Down to earth | Daring | Upper-Class | Outdoorsy |
| Hard-working | Friendly | Exciting | Good-Looking | Masculine |
| Secure | Small-town | Trendy | Glamorous | Western |
| Intelligent | Honest | Spirited | Charming | Tough |
| Technical | Sincere | Cool | Feminine | Rugged |
| Corporate | Real | Young | Smooth | |
| Successful | Wholesome | Imaginative | | |
| Leader | Original | Unique | | |
| Confident | Cheerful | Up-to date | | |
| | Sentimental | Independent | | |
| | Family oriented | Contemporary | | |

Sample profile

| Variables | Categories | Amount | Total |
|----------------|-------------|--------|-------|
| Age | 19-21 | 84 | 200 |
| | 22-24 | 62 | |
| | 24-26 | 54 | |
| Gender | Male | 100 | 200 |
| | Female | 100 | |
| Academic Year | First Year | 50 | 200 |
| | Second Year | 50 | |
| | Third Year | 50 | |
| | Final Year | 50 | |
| Marital Status | Married | 6 | 184 |
| | Bachelor | 184 | |
| Monthly Income | 8000-12000 | 12 | 200 |
| | 6000-8000 | 76 | |
| | 4000-6000 | 112 | |

Source: - survey data

VI. DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES

For data collection instrument, comprehensive and appropriate synonyms for Aaker’s 42 traits have investigated and it was helped by English Dictionary. Further clarifications have done through using Oxford Advanced Learners’ Dictionary. Later to find the original synonyms researchers have taken the supports of English Language Teaching Unit to give more understand to the Students who participated to the survey. The basis for the synonyms collection was the set of personality traits presented by Aaker in her unique paper. In her paper, she introduced a table with a set of forty two personality traits that she suggested should serve as an aid for comparing brand personalities crossways dissimilar categories. Questionnaire was pre-tested among several students and students are asked to complete the scale for each of the four mobile brands in India. Only five dimensions such as Sincerity, Excitement, Sophistication, Competence and Ruggedness are calculated for each brand with using five point scales. Total values that generated from the survey grouped in to five dimensions as per the model and cumulative amounts were taken in to consideration. Descriptive statistics are helped to interpret the findings.

VII. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Airtel is strongly perceived by Indian consumers as a rugged brand. And its mean value is 24.56 with in the category of Strong (25-18.33). In the mean time Competence is also

shared by the brand and its mean value is 40.2 within the strong category (45-33). Other than mentioned two dimensions Airtel is also portraits the strong Excitement with showing mean value of 44.89 within the Strong category (55-40.33).When it comes to Airtel it is strongly perceived as more sincere brand and its mean value is 44 within the strong category (55-40.33). Other major personality dimension which shared by the Vodafone is competence and it is also with in strong category (45-33) and perceived mean value is 36. University students consider brand Reliance as an excited brand or in other word it is greater on Excitement dimension. It represents mean value of 41.4 within the range Strong (55-40.33). Like other Idea, Reliance also share moderate amount of Sincerity. And its mean value is 27.54(moderate -40.33-25.67). As a brand Idea doesn’t have specific strong personality dimension which is perceived by the university students and all dimensions show weaker personality characteristics as a whole. Based on the exhibit 03 information it is identified that most sincere brand as Airtel (mode-44) and second priority has given to the Vodafone (mode-27.54). But again Reliance (mode-41.4) also carries the second place in consumers mind. When it comes to competence; most competence brand is Airtel (mode-40.2) and here Vodafone (mode-36) ranked as second. Most significant fact is that any brand is not identified with dimension Sophistication strongly but perceived in weakly. But with ruggedness Airtel (mode-24.56) again taken the first position compared to other brands.

Exhibit 03

| Brand | Aaker’s Five Personality Dimensions (Traits) | | | | |
|----------|--|------------|------------|----------------|------------|
| | Sincerity | Excitement | Competence | Sophistication | Ruggedness |
| Airtel | 12 | 44.89 | 40.2 | 10.52 | 24.56 |
| Vodafone | 44 | 23.21 | 36 | 12.42 | 8.2 |
| Reliance | 7.54 | 41.4 | 16.3 | 11.89 | 6.77 |
| Idea | 14.23 | 12.35 | 9.87 | 7.1 | 5 |

Source-survey data



VII.I RELATIONSHIP OF BRAND PERSONALITY AND DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

Among the sample most male students identified that Airtel as a rugged brand and it is about 83% from total number of hundred males and 76% of females have identified Airtel as a Rugged brand name (Out of hundred female students). And also major segment of both male and females perceived that as a whole Idea does not have specific personality characteristics (Male respondents' contribution -89% and female respondents 91%). Sample represented the young crowd in the market. In here ruggedness of brand Airtel is very prominent and researchers identified it might be due to the westernization of ideas among the younger generation in India. Most students represent the age in between 19-21 category and which is about 42% from the total sample. Findings are largely influenced by this segments perception. The sample is drawn from the commerce and management faculty where it is believed that most of thinking patterns and perception process changed in to the American management styles and communication styles. When it comes to female participants most of them (86%) identified that Vodafone as a sincere brand. Out of all the variables most males perceived excitement dimension and it is about 85% from the total males.

VIII. LIMITATIONS

Researchers are aware about the possibility of different the perception of brand personality when it come to the Indian context even sample represent the vast geographical area in India. On the other hand sample represent the young educated crowd (university students) in India this generally doesn't give the meaningful picture about the reality. But it is accepted fact that most students in university possess at least one mobile brand so it is possible that students represent the cross section of larger population of mobile brand users. On the other hand they possess the knowledge on dimensions that defined by the Aaker rather than the general population due to the management background and ability to understand the company communication. Further limited budgets prevents researchers to go for large sample and sometimes this results would have been different form this.

IX. CONCLUSION

Different brand personalities revealed that four brands have somewhat closer dimensions due to companies various value added services, communication activities and their overall performances. However this seems greater competition among the brands to win customers. But again major player is somewhat different from other three brands. However findings revealed that companies are not using brand personality as mean of delineation tool so this needs greater attention. When it comes Airtel is strongly perceived as rugged brand compared to other brands. Researchers see this as new way of thinking by the Airtel as they always portrays the achievement oriented communication theme combined with different ideas. Respondents believed that traits such as western, outdoorsy and masculinity highly persuaded by the company. Fewer differences are identified by the customers in Idea. Researchers came out with the idea; this is due to the lower communication activities done by them.

Nevertheless the sentimental issue seems to be corresponding with respondents. Finally it can conclude that respondents perceive more than two dimensions from each mobile brand in India; Airtel-excitement, ruggedness and competence/ Vodafone-sincerity and competence/ Reliance- sincerity and excitement/.The findings of current scrutinizing have more implication for practitioners. Where respondents seems to be more going toward to the excitement competence and sincerity. Communication should direct to further develop on these dimensions. It is recommended that companies should more vigilant in the environment due to the free market access. So personality's dimensions should develop considering the social and market changes (stimulus).

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