

Brand Personality of Top Five News Channels in Pakistan

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Abstract

This research study investigates brand personality of top five news channels of Pakistan including Geo, ARY, Express, Bol and Samaa News in the age of media dark. It is quantitative in approach and adopted 'Aaker's Dimension of Personality Traits Model' for investigation and analysis. The respondents, exclusively news viewers, are sampled and data is collected through a carefully designed questionnaire from 200 participants, aged between 18 and 60 years. The sampled respondents represent diverse socio-economic class ranging from A to E from the city of Karachi. An in-depth analysis is done to identify the perceived brand personality of the leading news channels of the country. Findings of the study indicate that there is a significant personality and brand image of each news channel with some unique and other common attributes recognized by the native news viewers during public survey. This research will enable concerned news channels to be aware of their brand image from audience perspective and revisit their programme and marketing strategies accordingly. Besides, understanding of channel's persona will further assist them to identify and approach the

appropriate potential and current advertisers for business with better insights about the unique personality traits of their channels.

Keywords: Brand Personality, News Channels, Personality traits, Personality Dimensions, Advertisers and Programme.

Introduction

Introduction and Background

There are many definitions of brand given by experts on the topic. It has been called as an emotional or psychological bond with customers. Some just consider it as a name of a product or service given to it by a company. It has often been termed in terms of its tangible features like design, symbol, term, or any other features which can be touched or seen and differentiates it from other sellers. These might be all the partial part of what a brand is. Neumeier (2003) set some ground rules in presentation regarding what brand is not. He elaborated that a brand is not any product, logo or identity but gut feeling of any person regarding the organization and its product or services.

Another idea is that a brand has deeper meanings which include the cause it stands for. This concept of brand summarizes as intangible totality of a product's traits by the Father of Advertising, David Ogilvy. However, according to the Neumeier (2004), "Brand is a perception of a person for a product, service, experience, or organization." This opens an avenue for brands to reach their audience in a better way with targeted communication. Brand personality helps brands convey their message and aids in developing sustainable relationships with its audience. It also helps humans to connect with the brand as a person and not just as a product or service.

Literature Review

Brand personality is defined as the association of human characteristics to a brand according to consumer perspective (Aaker, 1997). It shows that the audience of any brand can easily identify a brand in the context of human traits and features. These factors play a great role in terms of consumer understanding of any brand and also help identifying the target audience for any brand in the long run with consistency.

The present era in Pakistani media industry is recognized as the “Media Dark”. It refers to the current situation in which no reliable channel rating system is functional in the country. In media industry where products (channels) are profoundly like one another, transforming brand is crucial for their survival (McDowell, 2004). It demands broadcasters to establish a system to gauge the performance of each channel. In addition to that, news channels must identify who are their existing advertisers and business partners and who can potentially become one?

Brand personality traits can also be associated with TV channels. According to Chan-Olmsted & Cha (2007), it is advantageous to audit the competitive positions of news channels in brand personality's perspective in terms of credibility as it is an important factor in news consumption. Developing a distinguishing brand personality is indispensable for unique brands having similar attributes. The cutthroat competition calls for TV channels, and specifically news channels, to review their brand management in such times (Bellamy & Traudt, 2000). News channels must identify what their brand personality is to create a point of distinction. This will not only build their relevant audience but also create an ease for advertisers to determine where their money should be invested. It will give a clear direction for advertisers in terms of reaching to their audience through pertinent news channels and optimize their spending against the reach and frequency of their message being delivered to their audience.

The significance of personality of any brand comes from the actuality that builds up brand personalities, like human identities, and is viewed as persevering and generally hard to copy (Aaker, 1996). Just as human beings are different from each other, news channels can also relate to these human traits to separate themselves from their competition and stand out from the clutter. News channels can also work for improvement or amendment in their brand personality. It will be beneficial to them to tap into new group of audience viewership while retaining the current viewership. Hence, news channels with different brand personalities will attract different type of advertisers to invest their media plans.

To validate the brand personality connection with audience, Govers and Schoormans (2005) suggested that individuals lean toward products or services with an identity that matches their self-image. This can be elaborated as the better conformity between the distinctive and consistent human qualities of an individual and those of a news channel leads to an obvious inclination towards the news channel.

Many research studies were conducted in the field of personality psychology to identify the personality of any brand. Researchers have a unanimous agreement that there are five major dimensions to conceptualize personality of any brand that includes “Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication, and Ruggedness” (Aaker, 1997). These five dimensions are further broken down into different personality traits which sums up to 44. The plan to begin from all human traits that can be found in a dictionary originates from the assumption that language use naturally contains all applicable and striking traits of personality (Allport, 1937). This very fact endorses the traits identified in Dimension of Personality Traits. All the traits used in the said model are based on human characteristics that are used in day-to-day conversations and part of public language.

Having a standard model which is accepted by all the practitioners is important. This brings about the consistency in terms of the research and has a standard measure to test any brand personality over the period. This is one of the major reasons that a scale is determined, tested and agreed upon by the practitioners because of the frequency of usage of the model in studies carried out by the practitioners (Austin et al., 2003). For this research we will be using Dimension of Personality Traits to identify the brand personalities of top five news channels and comparison of their personalities in the context of their human characteristics.

Methodology

For this study, quantitative research method is being used with a sample of 200 individuals. These individuals are from the age range of 18 to 60 years old, and associated with the diverse socio-economic class extended from A to E. The sample is taken from the news channel viewers based in Karachi. The number of 200 individuals has been sampled from the overall population of Karachi which is 16.62 million as per recent census of 2017. The confidence level is 95% which results in the error margin of 7%. The formula for error margin is below:

$$z^* \sqrt{\frac{\rho(1-\rho)}{n}},$$

In this case, the z-score is 1.96 which means the confidence level is at 95%. Sample proportion (p) is 0.5 with the sample size (n) of 200. This results in margin of error of 0.069 which turns into percentage and rounded off to 7%.

The questionnaire used in this quantitative study includes demographic details of the respondents to ensure precise audience has been participated. There is a desirable inclination towards younger audience aged between 18 and 39 years. The idea is to identify channel's personality from the point of view of audience who will have a longer lifespan. The socio-economic range of the

audience is widespread from SEC A to E to ensure a better representation of diverse news channels audience from the city.

Findings and Analysis

In order to determine the personality of the identified news channels, we inquired our respondents with questions about how the news channel they watch would be if they were a human being. The questions included demographic and personality traits, following Aaker's Dimension of Personality Traits model. Following are the findings of our study based on the survey of 200 respondent regarding news channels viewers in Karachi.

These respondents had 70% male and 30% female participants. The major portion of respondents were aged between 18 to 29 years, making a 39% of total respondents followed by the age group of 30 to 39 years old having 30% of the respondents. Participants aged 40 to 49 years old made a total of 22% of the respondents while remaining 9% of the respondents are from the age group of 50 to 60 years old.

A total of 59% of the respondents are graduate followed by 23% of the participant with post graduate or above level degree. Remaining 18% of the respondents are intermediate or below.

Around 27% of the respondents belong to service class followed by senior executives (21%). A detailed occupational breakup is given in appendix in the end of the report.

ARY NEWS

As per the findings of this study, ARY News is found to have a personality of a middle-aged male in his early 30s with graduation or above level degree. Professionally, it seems to be a senior manager or medium to large scale business owner belonging to middle class background with Urdu as its mother tongue. According to respondents the three significant personality

dimensions of ARY News include sincerity, competence and ruggedness.

Detailed statistics from the survey representing personality dimension are discussed below.

Gender

As per our finding, around 13% of the respondents said ARY News has a feminine personality against a majority of the respondents (87%) who consider ARY News a male.

Age

The study also found that most of the respondents (64%) consider ARY News a middle-aged individual as compared to respondents who conceive the channel as a young adult (25%), old aged (9%), and in his teens (1 %), which sums as 36% of the total proportion.

Education

From this study, it is found that 66% of the respondents think ARY News is a graduate if it were a human being. Around 21% of the respondents consider the channel having education at post graduate or higher level. However, only 13% of the people consider the channel might stand at the education level of intermediate or below.

Occupation

According to the study, ARY News is considered to have a medium or large business or is a service class senior manager in terms of profession that makes up 55% of the viewers'' response.

Socio-economic Class

The study found that ARY is considered to belong to middle or upper middle class (Sec B+ and SEC A) as per the perception of 69% of the respondents, whereas 27% of the respondents consider it to belong to upper (SEC A+) class.

Mother Tongue

The mother tongue of ARY News is considered to be Urdu by 90% of the respondents.

Personality Traits

Traits of ARY News traits showed that it falls into four personality dimensions, which define its persona in the eyes of its viewers. They consider it as a sincere channel which is exciting at the same time and it also possess characters of being competent and rugged if it was a human being.

BOL NEWS

As per the survey, Bol News is considered to be a young adult turning into middle-aged male with age ranging from 28 to 32 years old. This young man, according to the survey seems to be well educated who is studying as well as working as a successful medium-sized business man or at a mid-level managerial position in career. He is on his pathway from Upper middle (SEC A2) to Upper (SEC A1) class with mother tongue seems to be Urdu. Bol predominantly reveal four personality dimensions namely sincerity, excitement, competence and sophistication. Below are detailed statistics with their graphical representation.

Gender

According to the study, 80% of the respondents who watch BOL News consider it a male and only 20% of the respondents consider it a female if BOL News were a human being.

Age

The study found that 50% of the respondents consider BOL News as a young adult. Following that are 40% of the respondents who consider it as a middle-aged man. Remaining 10% perceive it as an old-aged person.

Education

According to the survey, 75% of the BOL News channel viewers regarded it at the education level of graduate. This is followed by the respondents (20%) who consider it to be post graduate or above. Only 5% of the respondents said that they consider it as an intermediate.

Occupation

Out of all BOL News viewers from the respondents, around 40% of them assume that it owns a medium to large business followed by 30% who think it is in mid-level to senior manager position in its career path, whereas 20% predict that it is either a student or a housewife.

Socio-economic class

The survey shows that 60% of the respondents believe that Bol belongs to upper middle class followed by 25% of the respondents, who consider it from the Upper Class. Remaining 15% respondents said that it seems to be from middle class (SEC B) background.

Mother Tongue

As the finding suggest all the respondents said that BOL News has Urdu as its mother tongue if it were a human being.

Personality Trait

The results of the survey study signify that the viewers which follow BOL News, consider it to be a sincere person who is exciting and carries himself with sophisticated style

EXPRESS NEWS

Public survey results in the current study show that Express News is considered a middle-aged male who is well educated. It seems to most viewers a person who is either in senior level management

position or has a medium or large business if it is a self-employed professionally. Apparently, it belongs to a middle class background and speaks Urdu but knows Punjabi as well. As far as significant personality dynamic is concerned, it is pre-dominantly sincerity. Apart from this, it has many other dimensions in small proportion. Below is graphical understanding of the results from the survey.

Gender

Express News is considered a male by (84%) of the respondents while only 16% of the respondents consider it a news channel with feminine features.

Age

If Express News were a human being it would have been a middle-aged person as voted by 72% of the respondents in the study. However, 28% of the respondents had a split between young adult (12%) and old age (16%) persona for Express News respectively.

Education

The study shows that Express News has a graduate level education as per (64%) of the respondents and whereas the remaining consider it at an educational level of post graduate or above (36%).

Occupation

A majority of 40% respondents think it is a senior manager while a combined percentage of 44% of the respondents believe it to have a medium or large business or is a self-employed professional. Remaining 12% of the respondents believe that it is a mid-level manager and only 4% of the respondents think that it seems to be a small business owner.

Socio-economic Class

It is believed by 48% of the respondents that it belongs to upper middle class background followed by 36% of the respondents

saying it belongs to middle class. Remaining 16% of the respondents think it belongs to upper class.

Mother Tongue

A significant majority i.e. 84% of the respondents think it has Urdu as its mother tongue while only 16% of the respondents said that its mother tongue is Punjabi.

Personality Trait

Express was the only channel that represents almost all personality dimensions as perceived by its audience i.e. Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication and Ruggedness However, it fails to show any one of these dimensions as its significant personality trait in result.

GEO NEWS

Geo News is considered to be a middle-aged male who is at least a graduate with senior manager level position in career or owns a medium to large business. He belongs to upper middle to upper class with Urdu as its mother tongue. Its personality dimensions are spread over sincerity, competence, sophistication and ruggedness. The statistical data from the survey is discussed as follows.

Gender

According to the study, 90% of Geo News viewers consider it a male while only 10% of the respondents consider it a female if it were a human being.

Age

As per the study, majority of Geo News viewers perceive it as a middle-aged person up (82%) of while remaining 18% of the respondents have a mix view on its age range 18-60.

Education

As per the survey, 67% of the respondents who watch Geo News think that it is graduated. It is followed by 18% of the respondents who perceive it is at the level of a post graduate or above. Remaining of the respondents assume that it is either intermediate or illiterate (15%).

Occupation

According to the survey, 35% of the respondents think it owns a medium to large business while 34% of the respondents consider it having a mid to senior level position in its career path.

Socio-economic Class

Around 55% of the respondents believed it to be from the middle class (SEC B and SEC A2) by whereas 39% of the respondents consider it from upper class (SEC A1). Only 6% of the respondents think of it to belong from lower class (SEC C).

Mother Tongue

A majority of 75% of the respondents believe that the mother tongue of Geo News is Urdu with 25% of the respondents consider it as a person whose mother tongue is Punjabi.

Personality Trait

As per the survey we got second most favorable response for Geo News in terms of its persona among its audience. Geo in the eyes of its audience is considered as a tough (rugged) news channel, which is competent of doing new things and make existing things exciting. At the same time, it's declared sincere by most of its fan followers.

SAMAA NEWS

As per the results of the survey, Samaa News is considered to be a young adult male turning into a middle-aged person with at least a graduate. It is considered to be an employed person belonging to a service class. According to the survey, it seems a middle class guy whose mother tongue is Urdu but it might have command over Punjabi as well. Its personality dimension is dominantly sincerity with other dimensions having relatively little weightage. The detailed representation of the study is below.

Gender

According to the study, 82% of the respondents consider it as male, while only 18% of the respondents considered it a female.

Age

Respondents had a tie between middle-aged (39%) and young adult (39%) in terms of age bracket identification while only 21% of the respondents believed it to be an old aged person.

Education

The survey found that 71% of the respondents believe Samaa News is a graduate followed by 21% of the respondents who consider it a graduate or above in terms of education. This leaves 8% of the respondents divided equally who believes that Samaa News is either an intermediate or a matriculate individual.

Occupation

Out of all the respondents of Samaa News, overall 53% of the respondents combined believe that it is at medium to senior managerial level in its career path and as a service professional while 21% of them said it would have a medium to large business.

Socio-economic Class

A majority of 93% of the respondents combined believe Samaa News belongs to upper middle-upper upper class (SEC A1 and SEC A2) while only 7% of the respondents consider it belongs SEC B class.

Mother Tongue

A total of 75% of the respondents think it has Urdu as its mother tongue while 25% of the respondents believe its mother tongue is Punjabi.

Personality Trait

Samaa is the only channel which falls into two personalities when it comes to the personality dimension scale. Its audience considers it as a sincere person and a man who is competent enough to survive in the media fight.

Discussion

A lot of similarities are found among leading news channels in terms of personality dynamics as highlighted by the public survey conducted. These similarities are complimented by some unique personality features each news channel is perceived to possess. For example, all the news channels are predominantly perceived to have a male personality. ARY News, Geo News, and Bol News are found to be middle aged while Express News and Samaa News are considered as younger men soon to enter their middle age.

Each of these news channels is generally considered to be well educated who would have a broader perspective towards life and socio-political issues. Socio-economic class of these news channels also reflects that they belong to SEC A2 or transitioning to SEC A1 if we compare their perceived education level with the perceived occupation. In terms of their mother tongue, ARY, Geo, and Bol News are found to be Urdu speaking individual while Express News and Samaa have a perception of having Punjabi background as well, in addition to Urdu, as their mother tongue.

In terms of personality dimensions, there are perceived variations as well as some striking similarities. It is noted that a common personality aspect that has been perceived by audience in almost all these news channels is sincerity. It is an important dimension when it comes to news channels for their credibility and authenticity.

Besides, audience perceived ARY, Geo, and Bol News as leading competitors who are striving for better ranking in the news industry. However, Express and Samaa News are not considered to be equally competitive. The very public perception seems to be a major barrier in attracting advertisers and viewers by these two channels alike.

Bol News has been able to establish itself as an exciting news channel among audience. The very feature helps Bol news in attracting and catering to younger audience who can relate to its youthful public image. This dimension is being missing from other competitive news channels. In addition to this, only Bol News and Geo News have manifested element of sophistication recognized by the respondents in this study. This means that these channels are recognized to represent high class and perceived as a socialite in terms of personality. This will benefit both these channels to showcase their professional achievements and get wider public acceptance. This dimension of personality also helps any news channel to deliver their content in their own unique style, experiment with new ideas and stand out from the clutter.

Finally, Geo News has another unique dimension which all other news channels in this study were unable to communicate to their audience. That is the dimension of ruggedness which speaks a lot about the brand personality and, in this case, a news channel. Geo News has been through a lot of ups and downs over the period of time since its inception. It has given the channel a rugged image, a channel who has been through tough times and has survived through every thick and thin. Geo News, as per the viewers, seems

to be a channel that can take all the criticism and hardships and will go an extra mile to deliver excellence.

Conclusion

This study, conducted with 200 respondents from Karachi, reveals diverse brand personalities of leading news channels. The respondents belonged to different walks of life and were classified according to their age groups. According to the study, each news channel is perceived to have some common personality dimensions such as sincerity which seems to be essential for any news channel. Personality dimension of competence is also an integral part of any news channels character which can be developed over time. However, some of the news channels, which are more mature and have been in the industry for longer period, seem to have distinguished brand image. All the news channels are perceived as well-educated male belonging to upper middle to upper class and having good education as the study reveals the very personality trait which gives them an authority to provide authentic and real news in a responsible manner of these leading news channels in Pakistan must strive towards developing their brand personality and image in a unique way, which will help them stand out in the industry and attract relevant audience as well as advertisers.

Limitations

The study conducted was done in the best possible way. However, the scope of the study was restricted to the news channel viewing audience based only in the city of Karachi. This study has taken into consideration top five news channels and doesn't consider other smaller scale news channels which are also competition in the news industry. Furthermore, this study analyzed the brand personality of the identified news channels over a short period of time while channels developed or changed over a longer period due to several factors.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the personality dimensions and relevant traits should be translated subsequently in local language prior to the application of the Dimension of Personality Traits model. This helps in better understanding of the respondents and facilitates them to define the personality of a channel more aptly. In this case, only one model was used for identifying the news channels' personalities. However, researchers recommended the use of multiple models to find out if there might be any difference or similarities. Using larger number of news channels might also help categorizing news channels according to their personalities. This will help identifying advertisers what media mix will work better for them when making or approving media plans for news channel category.

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