

A Study on Brand Personality of Coca-Cola and Pepsi

A Comparative Analysis in the Indian Market

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Abstract— Prior researches on brand personality have shown that consumers develop relationships with brands and often anthropomorphize inanimate products. Coca-Cola and Pepsi are two leading soft-drink brands in India occupying 95% of the soft-drink market. With low, almost negligible, functional benefits (read: health benefits) of soft drinks (Vartanian, Schwartz, & Brownell, 2007) and no differentiation in taste, colour or price of the two brands, marketers have to cash in on the self-expressive value of their product. This study comparatively evaluated personality perceptions of the two brands for young Indian consumers.

Keywords- Brand Personality, The Cola Wars, Coca-Cola, Pepsi, Successful Brands.

I. INTRODUCTION

In a first-of-its-kind global ranking of the most chosen consumer brands, Kantar Worldpanel has released a report of top 50 brands that are being chosen by maximum consumers across the globe, the most often. Coca-Cola is the world leader, being chosen 5.3 billion times a year and commands a 5295 million consumer reach point. The developed markets act as gold mines for carbonated soft drinks (CSD), but, this time, Coca-Cola has the emerging markets of Asia to thank for its growth. 7% (= 230 million consumers) of its increase in consumer reach points is from the emerging markets. With consumer reach points of 1797 million, Pepsi ranks 4th in global rankings [1].

Successful brands, to establish a strong foothold, focus on communicating an idea that caters to the current ideologies and also which is, culturally relevant to each market [2]. The marketer focuses on constructing a *different* product image around the generic assumptions about the product. From gadgets to real estate to food and beverages, each category has products aiming at establishing themselves as being a notch higher or different from their counterparts, using a Unique-Selling-Proposition (USP). But, the idea is not just to have a Unique-Selling-Proposition, instead a *meaningful* Unique-Selling-Proposition [3].

II. BRAND PERSONALITY

A. What does it mean?

Brand Personality comes into play when the marketer aims at communicating a meaningfully different product attribute. Brand Personality has been defined as the character of a product (Se'guela, 1982); the human traits, which convey the functional benefits of the product (Plummer, 1985); the combination of all elements of the marketing mix (Batra, Lehmann and Singh, 1993); the set of human traits associated with a brand (Aaker, 1997); the adjectives used to describe the brand (VanAuken, 2004) and by several other researchers from different viewpoints. This study understands brand personality as the consumers' perceptions towards a brand, beyond its functional benefits. As stated by Keller (1998), brand personality "reflects how people feel about a brand, rather than what they think the brand is or does".

B. Why it matters?

Brands are humanized, animated and given anthropogenic qualities [4]. Research has shown that consumers are in relationships with their brands [4] which at times, they find weird to admit [5]. Consumers connect with a brand they can identify with and prefer to pick the brand that complements their personality [6]. Higher the distinctiveness of a brand, higher does the consumer gauge the brand's attractiveness, leading to positive word-of-mouth [7]. Consumers often buy products to enhance their self-image; celebrity endorsements attest this fact by increasing the 'desirable' quality of brands [8]. It is not only a complementing brand personality that consumers prefer, but also a *self-enhancing* brand personality that consumers wish to project as their own. Resultantly, it is important for marketers to convey to the consumers that one point of difference of their product (functional or emotional benefit), which will go on to reflect on its user.

Consumers, along with choosing one brand over another (with equal availability), also decide to project themselves as users of the specific brand. There can be several reasons as to why consumers choose a brand over another similar brand. For collectivist cultures, brands may be used as a medium of 'fitting in'; while in individualistic cultures, brands may be chosen as a medium of differentiation [5]. Whichever the case,

consumers consciously choose to be seen with the brand and be associated with it and thus, understanding the consumer's 'image' of the brand is crucial to marketers and also, to researchers of buying behavior. Effective and relevant marketing plans can be developed based on the collective notion of the consumer towards the brand.

C. Why Coca-Cola v/s Pepsi?

Coca-Cola and Pepsi are two leading soft-drink brands in India occupying 95% of the soft-drink market. With low, almost negligible, functional benefits (read: health benefits) of soft drinks [9] and no differentiation in taste, colour or price of the two brands, marketers have to cash in on the self-expressive value of their product. In absence of a functional point of difference, the brands' emotional or self-expressionist values become the focal point of difference. Other products like Sprite and Limca have not been chosen because differentiation would also be assisted by their colour (Sprite and Limca have a clear colour) and thus, the product's personality will be influenced by other variables.

III. METHODOLOGY

Recent researches on brand personality have majorly used Aaker's Brand Personality Scale (1997), while; some researchers have developed scales for the purpose of their specific study. Owing to doubts on the reliability and validity of available scales [10], some researchers argue that "if unequivocal results are to emerge, consumer behavior researchers must develop their own definitions and design their own instruments to measure the personality variables that go into the purchase decision" (italics in original, Kassarijan, 1971). For the purpose of this study, a questionnaire on Brand Personality of soft drinks was constructed. The items of the questionnaire were based on the five core brand personality factors- Sincerity, Competence, Excitement, Sophistication and Ruggedness, as indicated by Aaker (1997) [11]. The questionnaire included a reverse-coded question to check response biases and get accurate ratings. A 10-point Likert-scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" was used. A sample of 100 was selected based on quota sampling and data was collected. Exclusionary criteria for sample were: age less than 18 and more than 25 years. The following table indicates the demographics of the sample:

TABLE I. CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

	Coca-Cola	Pepsi
No. of Consumers	60	40
Gender	Males-32; Females- 28	Males-25; Females- 15
Marital Status	Single	Single
Occupation	Student- 57;Employed- 3	Student- 37;Employed- 3
Monthly Income		
Up to 10,000/-	6	5
10,000-20,000	1	2
20,000-50,000	10	8
Above 50,000/-	43	25

The five core dimensions measured fifteen facets as follows:

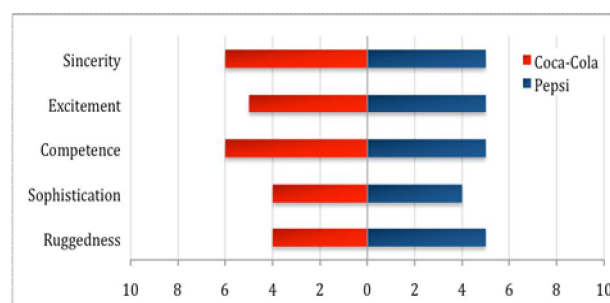
1. Sincerity- Down-to-Earth, Honest, Wholesome, Cheerful
2. Excitement- Daring, Spirited, Imaginative, Up-to-Date
3. Competence- Reliable, Intelligent, Successful
4. Sophistication- Upper Class, Charming
5. Ruggedness- Outdoorsy, Tough

A 'factor' on this scale represents a group of 'facets'.

IV. FINDINGS

Brand Personality Dimensions developed by Aaker (1997) characterize a brand's personality on five factors [11]. The scores of both the colas on each factor are represented by the graph below.

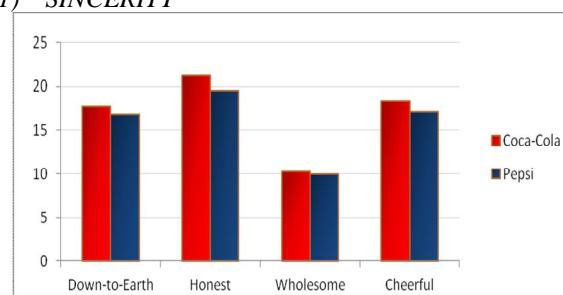
Figure 1. Factor Rankings



On the Sincerity and Competence factors, Coca-Cola ranks higher as compared to Pepsi [7]. Pepsi is considered more 'rugged' as compared to Coca-Cola. Both the colas rank the same on Excitement and Sophistication factors [7].

A. Factor and Facet Comparisons:

1) SINCERITY

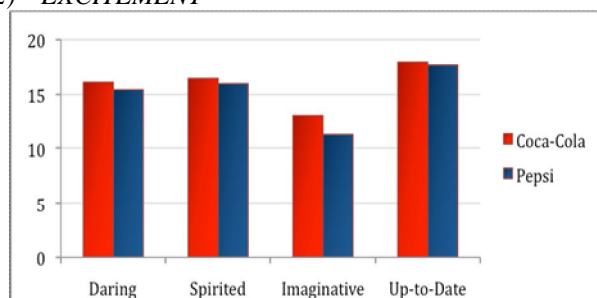


Coca-Cola dominates this factor. Four facets were studied under Sincerity, namely, Down-to-Earth, Honesty, Wholesomeness and Cheerfulness. In these four, *Coca-Cola is considered to be the most honest brand* [7]. Differentiating scores¹ between both brands, on each facet, indicate that *Pepsi scores the least on honesty*. True to the consumer image of carbonated drinks, both colas score the least (out of all 15

¹ Differentiating Scores indicate the differences in mean scores of both brands on a particular facet.

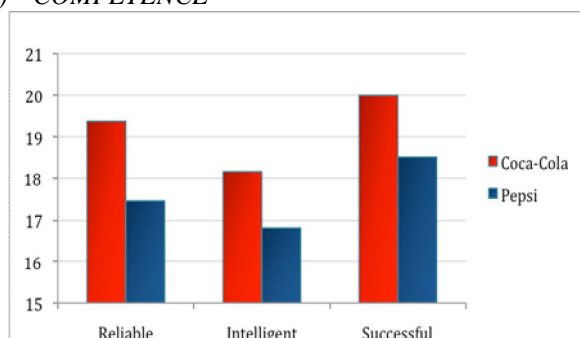
facets) on 'wholesomeness' i.e. being healthy choices of beverage.

2) EXCITEMENT



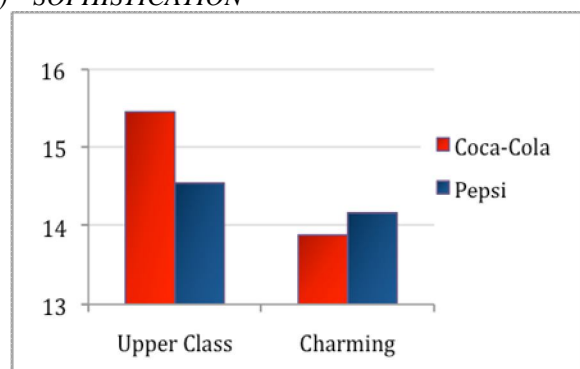
Neither of the brands clearly dominates this factor. The facets studied under Excitement were Daringness, Spiritedness, Imaginativeness and Up-to-Date. The scores of both the brands are similar on all facets, but, Imaginativeness. Differentiating scores suggest that *Pepsi scores the least on the Imaginative front.*

3) COMPETENCE



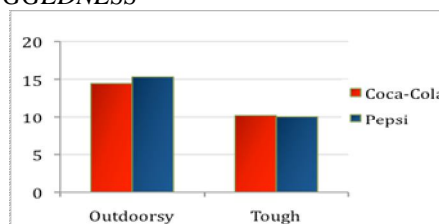
Coca-Cola leads the Competence factor [7]. The facets studied under Competence were Reliability, Intelligence and Successfulness. This factor shows the maximum differentiating scores, between the brands, on the reliability facet. Coca-Cola is also a high-scorer on the successfulness and intelligence front.

4) SOPHISTICATION



Neither of the brands dominates this factor. The facets studied under Sophistication were Upper Class and Charming. Coca-Cola is considered more Upper Class, while Pepsi is considered to be more Charming. None of the brands is significantly more sophisticated [7].

5) RUGGEDNESS



Pepsi scores more on this factor. The facets studied under Ruggedness were Outdoorsy and Toughness. While both the brands are considered to be equally tough, Pepsi is considered to be outdoorsy. However, as compared to overall 15 facets, 'toughness' is the second-lowest scored facet for both the brands. Thus, both the brands are found to be less 'tough' [7].

B. Gender Comparisons:

TABLE II. MEAN SCORES OF MALES AND FEMALES ON ALL 15 FACETS

Factors	Facets	Coca-Cola		Pepsi	
		Male	Female	Male	Female
Sincerity	Down-to-Earth	18	17	17	17
	Honest	22	20	18	21
	Wholesome	11	9	11	9
	Cheerful	19	18	16	18
Excitement	Daring	16	16	15	16
	Spirited	17	16	17	15
	Imaginative	13	12	11	12
	Up-to-Date	19	17	17	18
Competence	Reliable	20	18	18	16
	Intelligent	19	17	16	17
	Successful	21	19	18	20
Sophistication	Upper Class	16	15	15	14
	Charming	14	13	14	15
Ruggedness	Outdoorsy	15	14	15	15
	Tough	10	10	11	9

Coca-Cola: Males show a trend of exaggerated scores as compared to females on all 15 facets. Men and women both have scored Honesty as the highest representative facet. On the other hand, the least score by men is on toughness, while that for women is wholesomeness. For masculine facets like Daring, Outdoorsy and Tough both men and women have come to similar or same scores. However, for feminine facets like Upper Class and Charming, men have scored the brand higher than women.

Pepsi: No single facet ranks the highest for males. On the other hand, females have scored honesty as the highest. For masculine as well as feminine facets, both men and women have come to similar or same scores.

V. DISCUSSIONS

The objective of this study was to determine the brand personality of Coca-Cola and Pepsi.

1) Brand Personality

Fig.1 'Factor Rankings' shows that Coca-Cola is considered to be a Sincere and Competent brand, while Pepsi's

personality dimension lacks definition. The three most dominantly perceived personality facets for Coca-Cola are Honest, Successful and Reliable. The three most dominantly perceived personality facets for Pepsi are Honest, Successful and Up-to-Date. Comparatively, on all the three dominant facets, Pepsi scores lower than Coca-Cola.

Coca-Cola's dominant personality factors represent the following:

a) *Sincerity*

This factor indicates that the brand is considered to be an honest and real brand. The consumers trust the brand to provide them with standard quality products. Sincerity of a brand implies commitment from the brand to its consumers. This factor plays a huge role in creating reciprocal committed (loyal) relationships between the brand and its user.

b) *Competence*

This factor indicates that the consumers think of the brand as an expert of that field. Competence is connected with technical know-how, reliability and market success. Consumers tend to look for deeper meaning and purpose of products made by competent brands.

2) *Gender Differences*

As the *user* of the product changes, the *usage* also changes. Gender difference influences choice and preference [12]. Male consumers of Coca-Cola have displayed a constant trend of higher ratings on each facet (mean=17), while the female consumers have rated each facet at the mean score of 15. Men and women have both scored 'Honesty' as the highest representative trait. The least scored trait by men is toughness and by women is wholesomeness. Results show an inflated view of men towards the healthiness of Coca-Cola. For masculine facets like Daring, Outdoorsy and Tough, both men and women have rated the drink as low. Thus, Coca-cola is not considered to be a rugged, athletic brand.

Male and female consumers of Pepsi have equitable mean scores (=15) on the 15 facets. No significant gender difference was found in the personality views towards Pepsi. Also, Table II indicates an absence of a marked personality facet for the beverage.

VI. CONCLUSION

Results have shown that consumers consider Coca-Cola to be a Sincere and Competent brand while Pepsi is considered to be a Cheerful (young and trendy) brand. Coca-Cola has the image of an intelligent and imaginative marketer while Pepsi does not have such a marked image for its young consumers. Consumers consider both the brands equally successful. Also, both the beverages score equally on the Excitement and Sophistication factors. Overall, the results of this study suggest that Coca-Cola has a well-defined brand personality while the same cannot be said for Pepsi.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Brand Personality has become a keenly researched topic among marketers and researchers. This is not only because it makes the product attractive for new customers but also because it helps retain the existing customers by engaging them in loyal relationships with the brand. Thus, understanding the customer's views towards a brand is the way to go for creating a strong brand. Awareness of brand personality enables marketers to design advertisement campaigns around the generic views towards the brand. According to the results of this study, consumers do not have an apparent view of the personality of Pepsi and thus, marketers can promote a more persuasive personality trait in the Indian market.

Since this study involved a sample between the age group of 18 to 25 years, the views towards the brands pertain to the respective population. Further research can be done to assess the brand's personality for a different age group that will aid in expanding the consumer reach.

This study only addressed the personality opinions of users of the brand. Interesting results can be found if comparisons are made between personality opinions of users vs. non-users of the brands. The difference will be the gap to be covered by the brand to convert non-users into users. Also, future research on relationship between brand personality and brand loyalty should be undertaken to gauge the tangible benefits of the intangible personality dimensions.

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