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Does the level of Media Richness and Social Presence in brand messaging affect consumers perception of brand image?

An investigation into the effects of social media affordances on brand image

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Abstract

This study seeks to identify a potential relationship between the level of social presence and media richness in a brand message, and the expression of Aakers (1997) brand personality traits. To do so 3 surveys were conducted each asking participants to rate Aaker's (1997) brand personality traits in the Wells Fargo brand based on a recall task. Each recall task had a different brand message from the 'This is Wells Fargo Campaign' each showcasing different levels of media richness and social presence. Results of the study showed that the ratings of 4 of these traits ('Down-to-Earth', 'Honest', 'Cheerful' and 'Up-to-Date') had a statistically significant relationship with the level of social presence and media richness shown in the brand communication. The conclusion and recommendations of this study put forward several implications of these results for both academics and practitioners and theorises as to the potential cause of this relationship.

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1. Introduction

Social media has become the defining communication medium of the 21st century, in 2010 social media giants 'Facebook' and 'Youtube' were the most searched terms on the internet with 2.7 billion searches, with 15% of time online spent on social networking sites (Radwanick, 2011). This trend shows no sign of slowing down with year on year increases in time spent online and subsequently time spent on social media (King, 2018). The rise of Smartphone's has only added more fuel to this trend, with smartphone ownership as high as 85%, it is now the favoured device for social media usage and is quickly becoming the main device for online shopping (Chaffey and Smith, 2012; King, 2018; Rowles, 2014). In order for brands to attract consumer they must follow when attention shifts, and while there is always pushback, this has been the same in the digital generation. Digital marketing spend grew by 44% in 2017, across the United States and Britain reaching around \$52 billion with an estimated global spend of nearly \$100 billion (Reuters, 2018). Despite the social media's importance in the contemporary marketing environment there is still little known about its implications for traditional marketing theory.

This research seeks to understand if the affordances present in this new technology are affecting brand messaging and thus the subsequent perception of brand image that is being communicated. It is argued that objects are not perceived by their physical characteristic, but by the uses, they afford their users; technology is also categorised in this way (Gibson, 2015; Heidegger, 1954). Predicting affordances of new technology is extremely difficult as by their nature, affordances are limitless which owes to their unpredictability (Heidegger, 1954). The attributes of technology can be categorised in place of affordances, Humphreys (2016) puts forward six attributes of social media that can be applied to all platforms under the social media umbrella. This research focuses on, what are argued to be, the two most important attributes of social media; social presence and media richness, with their close dependence owing to them being studied in tandem (Humphreys, 2016).

1.1 Research Question

Does the level of social presence and media richness present in brand messaging affect consumers perception of brand image?

This question has changed and developed during the course of the literature review, beginning quite broad as (the effects of social media affordances on brand image) but has been narrowed to specifically focus on these two attributes. The research aims to build on the academic literature surrounding contemporary literature social media affordances' and link it to the traditional literature on brand image. In an age where multi-channel strategies are on the rage and brands are jumping onto any and all available social platforms we need to take a step back and understand how this rented space could be impacting brand image. There still appears to be a lack of understanding around the effects of social media affordances on brand messaging. This research provides a basis for brands (and academics) to understand how the affordances of social media are affecting brand messaging and the subsequent affect this has on brand image.

2. Background

The modern consumer is exposed to a constant barrage of media messages greater than ever before via a multitude of sources, made ever increasingly more prominent with the current mass migration of consumers to the digital realm (Robertshaw, 2017). Most homes now possess multiple laptops, smartphones and tablets, with overall smartphone ownership hitting an all-time high of 85% in April 2018, remaining a central part of people's media habits (Mintel, 2018; King 2018; McGrath 2018). Increased ownership and convenience of digital media devices is allowing consumers to traverse the current digital landscape with ease, while bridging the gap between their offline and online experiences (Rowles, 2014). We can see how attention is moving from conventional media channels (TV/Radio/Newspaper) towards platforms that exist in the digital realm more so with each new generation. 42% of Millennials find out about new products via social media with this rising to 52% for generation Z and this trend is expected to continue (Bartlett, 2019). As always, marketers follow this attention. Brands are eager to exploit all the major social media platforms; hoping to gain massive exposure due to their popularity and, with advertising in these spaces massively under-priced compared with traditional media, this shows no signs of slowing down (Aston Social, 2018, Shane, 2018, Vaynerchuck, 2019).

Brand image is a huge cornerstone of traditional marketing theory; it is used by organisations to create brand equity, often justifying the price for the products and services, while attracting consumers to not only purchase but to continue to do so in the future (Fournier, 1994; Rook, 1985; Wood, 2000). In order to build this image brands rely almost solely on their communications with consumers; this makes brand messaging a key component in building brand image and in that regard it becomes most important part of a brands marketing strategy (Fill and Turnball, 2016; Porter, 1985; Ratner, 2017; Rowles, 2014). In the digital realm it has become easier than ever to engage with consumers, but with less barriers to entry comes more competition; the digital realm is becoming saturated, just being online is no longer enough to give brands a fighting edge (Rowles, 2014; Ryan, 2016; Williams, 2005). If brands are to continue being successful online, they need to start becoming more efficient in their use of these mediums, to do so requires a deeper understanding of this technology and its interactions with brand image (Fill and Turball, 2016; Rowles, 2014; Yang, 2017).

Despite all the arguments for the use of social media for B2C engagement, should brands be more cautious about the platforms they use to engage with consumers? These platforms are rented space for brands; as such, brands have very little control; giving rise to a number of considerations, due to each platform having different features and potential uses with which they afford their users (Gibson, 2015). The affordances of traditional media channels and their repercussions are obvious; brands will often find it difficult to keep a consistent brand message across TV and radio, leading to many using one over the other (Mitchell, 2018). The digital marketing industry is largely starting to recognise that not all digital platforms are right for every business. Yet the exact implications of the affordances of each platform on brand image are still unknown and marketers are largely choosing platforms based on various factors (audience size, features etc), rather than how the platform aligns with the brands message (Digital Marketing Institute, 2019, Driver, 2018). Where traditional media revolved

around 'pushing' brand messaging on consumers (the dreaded advert break), digital media is designed to 'pull' consumers with content; yet many brands are still using traditional media 'push' tactics in the digital realm (Vaynerchuck, 2016).

While we know a lot about how social media affords particular types of organizational communications as well as communications between different users (Bughin and Chui, 2010; Fulk et al, 1987; Gibbs et al, 2013), we know less about the types of possibilities that social media affords brand messaging and image. The relevance of which sits in resolving contradictions that exist between theory and practice within the realm of digital marketing. Within industry, marketing professionals advocate strategies that hinge on producing high volume content across multiple social media platforms (Chahal, 2014; Vaynerchuck, 2016). While theory has developed an understanding of how these strategies create information overload that results in putting people off social media (Koroleva and Kane, 2017). Ward and Lee, (2000) found that while using the internet for purchasing decisions consumers can become overloaded with information causing them to revert back to the brand they know. Great for larger brands that can count on consumer loyalty, however not so great for brands trying to establish a foothold in the digital landscape (Ward and Lee, 2000). What is the best option for social media strategists moving forward: quality or quantity?

3. Literature Review

3.1 Affordance Theory

Affordance theory argues that we perceive the world not solely in terms of object shapes and spatial relationships but also in terms of the uses (i.e., affordances), that these objects provide, and it is this perception that drives action (Gibson, 2015; Heidegger, 1954). This concept is rooted in ecological psychology whereby it is argued that animals do not recognise what a particular object is other than the uses, that it "affords" (Heidigger, 1954; Gibson, 1986; Koroleva and Kane, 2017). This of course leads to the conclusion that an artefact can be perceived differently by a particular set of users or in different contexts (Aaker and Durairaj, 1997; Koroleva and Kane, 2017). Affordance theory therefore explains the flexible relationship between users and technology and how often technology is used in different ways including those not originally intended by its designers (Leonardi, 2011).

3.1.1 Affordance theory in Social Media

Recently there has been a widespread adoption of a new class of IT technologies known as social media, with over 70% of people now using some form of social media on a regular basis (Kane et al, 2014; Reynolds, 2018). The term 'Social Media' refers to a group of applications/platforms that incorporate some form of digital word of mouth (Fill and Turnball, 2016). Kietzmann et al (2011) states "social media employ mobile and web-based tech to create highly interactive platforms via which individuals share, co-create, discuss and modify UGC".

There has been a lot of discussion surrounding the implications of social media for internal organizational information sharing, with the adoption of Web 2.0 technologies occurring at a

rapid pace in the last 10 years (Bughin and Chui, 2010; Dubois, 2010; Gibbs et al, 2013; Jeffrey and Leonardi, 2013). Most of these early studies determined the success of social media in an organisational context was determined by the affordances of the SM tool used and the context with which it was used (Gibbs et al, 2013). This trend continues for the average user outside of an organisational context. Fox and Moreland (2015) and Pearce and Vitak (2015) came to the same conclusion about context being the biggest influence on the positive or negative effect of social media affordances despite studying audiences with opposing cultural backgrounds (Americans vs Azerbaijanis). These trends show that it would be unwise to generalise the effects of social media affordances from one context to another.

3.1.2 Identifying Core Affordances of Social media

Uses of objects and technology are governed by their material and structural properties, enabling some actions while constraining others, and so establishing a core set of attributes of social media would be key to comparing the affordances of each platform, (Gibson, 2015; Humphreys, 2016; Koroleva and Kane, 2017; Yang, 2017). This is necessary because, as affordance theory states, the total affordances are often limitless and unpredictable when observing technology design. The 'Twitter Thread' personifies this perfectly; with the 'Twitter Thread', users developed a way to write messages in a much longer form, despite Twitter being founded for the exact opposite purpose (microblogging). Each platform has defined characteristics but, these are perceived differently depending on the user, their experience and knowledge of the platform/medium (Fulk et al, 1987). Yang (2017) concluded that the affordances of social media provide a theoretical framework to understand which platforms enact the affordances of a particular type of content, how individuals interact with this content on different platforms and what communication outcomes this leads to. This could be the key for brands to identify which social media platforms could be beneficial for enhancing their brand image and which could be detrimental (Yang, 2017).

3.1.3 Attributes of Social Media

Humphreys (2016) puts forward six attributes that are crucial for understanding how social communication differs, these being: Social presence, Temporal Structure, Media richness, Permanence, Replicability and Mobility.

Social Presence- It is argued that the most important difference between types of social media is the degree of social presence; this being defined as how much the medium allows the users to experience each other as being psychologically present (Humphreys, 2016; Fulk et al, 1987). All messages convey some level of social presence the important factor is the relevant difference in social presence between each medium. For example, a live stream has much higher social presence than an email as it can present facial expression and tone of voice in a way email cannot (Humphreys, 2016). Although, as affordance theory predicts, users will often attempt to expand their social presence in mediums where high social presence is not an apparent feature. In emails, for example users will add "smiley faces", parenthesis and ellipses to increase the level of social presence in their messaging (Fulk et al., 1987; Negretti 1999).

Media Richness- This attribute describes the amount of "sensory information" transferred between the sender and the receiver, essentially the how stimulating the message is visually and audibly (digital messaging is yet to make advances in stimulating our other senses) (Daft & Lengel, 1986; Daft and Macintosh, 1981). This attribute is often confused with social presence, as additional social presence often requires additional media richness however; these attributes exist independent of each other despite their close relationship. A website that allows video, sound and chat formats would have messaging that is more media rich than a website which only supports text (Humphreys, 2016). The amount of media richness considered beneficial is dependent on the context of the message such as the senders, receivers and purpose of the message. A study conducted by Karimi and Neustaedter (2011) found that older users had issues interpreting social cues from messages with lower media richness, a problem that became more evident in users with less experience using the medium present.

Temporal Structure- While digital communication is still subject to technological limitations users can exchange messages instantaneously allowing people to be co-present in the same digital space; temporal structure refers to this level of co-presence allowed by the medium (Humphreys, 2016). In this context, communication exists either synchronously where users exchange messages immediately (Text, Skype, Facebook Messenger etc.) or asynchronously where users exchange messages over a few hours or days (Email, Message Boards, Forums etc.) (Humphreys, 2016; Donath 2004). Of course users must both be present to enable synchronous communication and while synchronous communication is technically possible in any form of social media different platforms enable a particular temporal structure through their features (Donath, 2004). For example Facebook Messenger encourages asynchronous communication by allowing users to see when their friends are online, when they have read received messages and when they are typing a new message (Facebook, 2019).

Permeance- How long the content of a message is accessible to its users is referred to as the permeance of the medium. While most major social media platforms retain a relatively high level of permeance one platform has succeeded in having a low permeance as its main selling point. Snapchats' core feature was to allow users to send picture messages that would disappear forever after a few seconds, and while they have since expanded their features greatly it remains a core part of their app (Snap Inc, 2019). Permeance remains a key issue in terms of online privacy and security being a growing concern amongst social media users but this is juxtaposed by the argument for accountability (Lepore, 2015; Madden, 2013; Pew 2013). In a world of growing privacy concerns in the aftermath of the Cambridge Analytical scandal there could be a climate brewing in which the social media giants take steps to reduce permeance or leave themselves vulnerable to new entrants that sooth this concern (Cadwalladr and Harrison, 2018).

Mobility- Some media is more portable than others in that it can be transported more easily, this often has a big impact on its affordances and potential communication uses, Innis (2007) refers to this as "heavy" versus "light" (Humphreys 2016). In its simplest form think radio versus television, radio is more mobile and can be used whilst driving where as television

cannot. This simple matter of mobility affects each medium in terms of their content, peak usage times and advertising costs; it would be almost useless for regular travel updates to be shown on TV however, it is a key feature of radio shows. With high Smartphone usage (the ultimate high mobility media) audio content is starting to make a new resurgence for brands because of the mobility it affords its users (Tesseras, 2018).

Replicability- Leesig (2004) highlights the concept of replicability as the degree to which information is easily reproduced, where text is relatively easy to copy the replicability tends to decrease as media richness increases (video, audio etc). Social media is built on the concept of co-creation and so the subject of replicability sits in a morally grey area in terms of how much is deemed acceptable for users to engage in (Kietzmann et al, 2011). Some companies police the content on their platform to ensure replicability is kept in check within the confines of fair usage. Youtube in particular has a defined system for dealing with potential copyright infringements on its platform to prevent certain instances of replicated content (Youtube, 2019). The EU has also attempted to crack down on users replicating some online content although the current legislation on the matter is vague and largely opposed by internet users and tech companies alike (Griffin, 2019).

3.1.4 Affordance Theory Conclusion

Affordance theory is an area of study deeply rooted in behavioural psychology that does well in explaining the flexible relationship humans have with technology, particularly in instances where technology is used in a way that was not originally intended by its creator. Affordance theory is therefore a relevant theoretical framework for studying social media, a technology which is ultimately driven by the behaviour of its users, relying on co-creation rather than the intentions of its creator (Humphreys 2016; Van Dijck 2009). The affordances of social media potentially provide a theoretical framework to understand which platforms enact the affordances of a particular type of content, highlighting the relevance this area of study has in informing the content strategies of brands in the digital landscape (Yang, 2017).

To recap, trying to directly categorise the affordances of social media is one major limitation that is unlikely to be solved; as the very essence of affordance theory states that affordances are potentially limitless and unpredictable. Affordances are governed by the characteristics of the object in question and so, in categorising the attributes of social media we can use these as a relative measure of their affordances. The six attributes discussed during this section (Social Presence, Media Richness, Temporal Structure, Permeance, Mobility and Replicability) are widely mentioned throughout literature on the subject and are recognised as the core attributes of social media that can be applied to all platforms. As such, they will be used as part of the theoretical framework to measure social media affordances and their effect on brand image.

Social media has evolved as one of the most pivotal marketing mediums of the millennial generation and as such plays a part in accelerating the interest in digital marketing within the marketing industry and in academia alike (Bartlett, 2019; Caliandro and Gandini, 2017; King, 2018; Rowles, 2014; Ryan, 2016; Vaynerchuck, 2019). Marketers and academics alike have

been scrambling to understand the place this new medium has in the contemporary marketing (Chaffey and Smith, 2012; Dann and Dann, 2011; Fill and Turnbull, 2015). Numerous strides have been made in understanding how users behave through this new medium and how to categorise the different attributes and how these variables interact within different contexts (Bughin and Chui, 2010; Dubois, 2010; Gibbs et al, 2013 Humphreys 2016; Van Dijck 2009). With the understanding of this new medium, it is now possible to attempt to understand its implications in traditional marketing theory. One such area of theory, which is surely to be affected, is the concept of building brand image. A big part of building brand image resides in the brands messaging, which in itself requires a medium with which to communicate with potential consumers (Chandon, 2003; Emile and Lee 2012; Rowles, 2014). However, what are the implications for organisations in using social media as a part of building brand image? One of the biggest tropes of marketing theory, ‘the medium is the message’, highlights the importance of understanding the interactions between these two variables; because as the medium becomes part of the message it subsequently becomes a part of the brand image (Blackman, 2017; McLuhan).

3.2 Brand Image

The use of brands as symbols with which consumers can attach a feeling of affinity is because brands are often imbued with human personality traits (Gilmore, 1919). This allows consumers to view brands, as they were people, allowing them to relate these brands to their own sense of self (Fournier, 1994; Rook, 1985). Organisations take advantage of this and use brand image as a mechanism to achieve a competitive advantage through the perception of differentiation, the traits that differentiate a brand provide perceived benefits that justify a products price (Wood, 2000). Brand personality is a powerful tool for organisations, it has been found to increase consumer preference, usage, levels of trust and loyalty and can even evoke certain emotions in consumers (Biel, 1993; Sirgy, 1982).

It is well accepted in marketing literature that brand messaging is the key component is building a brand image and therefore long-term brand equity (Fill and Turnbull, 2016; Porter, 1985; Ratner, 2017; Rowles, 2014). As such, it is important to understand any phenomena that affects this messaging, particularly in the digital realm, with many brands pursuing multi-channel strategies (Rowles, 2014; Ryan, 2016; Williams, 2005).

3.2.1 Measuring Brand Image – Aakers Brand personality Scale

One first has to understand how to measure brand image in order to understand how external phenomena could affect it (Chandon, 2003). Without quantifiable analysis of an organisations brand personality it is nearly impossible to know where the brand sits in the mind of consumers, how external factors affect brand image or how to effectively change or shape that image (Greenhalgh, 2017).

Aaker’s (1997) brand personality scale shows a set of five dimensions that describe the personality of a brand, similar to the personality of an individual, each described with several adjectives (Chandon, 2003; Emile and Lee, 1997). The amount with which a brand image is associated with each dimension is measured by how strongly consumers align each adjective

within the dimension with the brand in question (Aaker, 1997; Chandon, 2003). Aaker's (1997) model is widely used throughout the marketing literature being used to assess brands in a wide range of industries from financial services to tourism (Greenhalgh, 2017; Hosany et al., 2006; Mizik and Jacobson, 2005).

There have been some criticisms of Aaker's model as the loose term of 'personality' has caused researchers to use attributes beyond the scope of the psychological definition of 'personality' with Aaker's model (Azoulay and Kapferer, 2003). It has been advised that in studying brand personality researchers only stick to human personality traits that are relevant to brands (Azoulay and Kapferer, 2003). In order to address this criticism this study will focus on the core five dimensions that Aaker originally put forward as part of her brand personality model.

Aaker's method of measuring brand image consists of asking participants to what extent each facet describes a particular brand on a Likert scale (Chandon, 2003). This is used to create a matrix of the different dimensions that reflects the participants' perception of the brand's image. If consumers' perception of the brand is different from the company's positioning, then the market is not receiving the right message (Sampson, 1993).

3.2.1 Aaker's Brand Personality Dimensions

Sincerity

This dimension is made up of four facets, 'Down-to-earth', 'Honest', 'Wholesome' and 'Cheerful' (Aaker, 1997). It has been described similarly to agreeableness in other brand personality models, but revolves around the feeling of authenticity a brand has, with some arguing it is the sincerity trait, which leads to trustworthiness (Rutter, 2013; Snyder 2003). How dedicated a brand is to consumer satisfaction is also a big factor in determining the perception of this trait in a brand's image, however high expressions of this trait can potentially leave brands more vulnerable to the consequences of high-profile mistakes (Naresh, 2012; Snyder, 2003). Brands that exert high levels of sincerity tend to dominate the world of 'classic brands' and include the likes of Hallmark, Ford and Coca-Cola (Snyder, 2003).

Excitement

Excitement is the only other dimension to consist of 4 different facets, 'Daring', 'Spirited', 'Imaginative' and 'Up-to-Date'; this dimension is essentially built around qualities of energy and youthfulness (Aaker, 1997; Snyder 2003). Exciting brands include Yahoo!, Virgin and MTV with unique advertising, cool brand logos and 'hip' language making up the marketing connotations of brands with this type of image (Aaker, 1997; Aaker et al, 2004). These brands tend to be described as attractive and attention seeking and as such are highly capable of generating interest although they have a harder time creating long-term consumer loyalty (Altschiller, 2000). Despite holding less consumer loyalty and trust, they tend to perform better following acts of transgression when compared with brands that are considered sincere (Aaker et al, 2004).

Competence

Only 3 traits make up the competence dimensions, 'Reliable', 'Intelligent' and 'Successful' (Aaker, 2004; Aaker 2007). Adjectives that consumers use to describe competent brands include secure, intelligent, hardworking, and corporate; often this description has been related (but not limited) to brands with highly engineered products such as Mercedes and Rolex (Ranjbar, 2010). It has been found that consumers have an immediate attraction to signs of competence in brands, which leads to higher brand loyalty in the long term (Association for Psychological Science, 2014; Malone and Fiske, 2013). A high expression of competence in brands personality can boost consumer purchase intentions, as potential customers are more likely to believe the claims the brand makes about its products (Chan et al, 2018). For brands to enhance this trait, research has found that traditional offline media carries a more authoritative image than online media; encouraging consumers to perceive brands that use these mediums as more competent (Chan et al, 2018).

Sophistication

As one of the smallest dimensions, Sophistication has only two facets 'Upperclass' and 'Charming'(Aaker, 1997, Aaker 2004). It is arguably one of the hardest dimensions for brands to align with, requiring years of reinforcement to achieve a sophisticated brand image in the eyes of consumers (Bhasin, 2018). However in doing so there is a pay-off for brands, as this trait can lead to the creation of much higher brand equity, which allows the brand to charge a premium for its products(Aaker, 1997; Malone and Fiske, 2014). The fact that sophisticated brands are often described as glamorous or pretentious and include the likes of Rolex, Rolls Royce and Versace highlights this (Aaker, 2004; Malone and Fiske, 2014).

Ruggedness

Only 2 traits make up the final dimension, Ruggedness, these are 'Outdoorsy' and 'Tough' (Aaker, 1997). Essentially brands that exert this dimension are known for having a strong personality (Aaker, 1997). This dimension has been referred to as having low warmth but high competence, with a link to the stereotypical view of masculinity (Eagly and Stefen, 1984). While this dimension is largely associated with outdoor brands, the core defining aspect of the expression of this dimension is the idea of the strength or toughness (Kervyn et al, 2012). As such 'Rugged' brands exist in a wide variety of categories, from sports brands like Nike, energy drinks like Redbull, to motorbikes from Harley Davidson (Harvey, 2017; Kervyn et al, 2012).

3.3 Brand Image and Social Media

Within the digital marketing regardless of the business, market or industry, in question marketers have to alter their brand messaging content depending on the medium with which they are using to communicate (Smith et al, 2012). A brand cannot communicate with consumers via email in the same way that it would do so on Twitter. The same is even true for user generated content according to Smith et al (2012) (across Youtube, Facebook and Twitter at least). With the likes of Twitter (microblogging) at the opposite end of the UGC

spectrum to Youtube (Long-form video), it is clear how there is a wide range of social media that support different types of content (Smith, et al, 2012). In this process of altering content to fit a particular platform brands could be risking losing the clarity of the message the content was intended to convey.

Various authors have suggested that this brand personality in itself is created by a variety of marketing variables, with the variables in play having various consequences on the resulting brand image (Aaker, 1997; Batra et al 1993; Plummer 1985). The variables to be considered include user imagery, packaging and advertising which in itself will include brand messaging and the mediums with which this messaging is communicated (Aaker 1996, Levy 1959). The extent to which these variables shape the resulting brand image is still under much scrutiny within the marketing literature.

With the use of the Brand Personality Scale these variables can be manipulated and compared in such a way that their impact on a brand's perceived personality can be measured (Aaker, 1997). In the case of this study, the independent variable in question would be the social media affordances present in a particular brand communication and their level of expression across different mediums.

In order to use social media attributes as an independent variable alongside Aakers brand personality scale (as the dependent variable), several social media would have to be used as a relative comparison of expression of social media attributes. While through Aaker's brand personality scale there is an opportunity to quantify brand image, there is still a lack of a reliable method of quantifying social media attributes (Aaker, 1997; Gibson, 2015). Humphrey's social media attributes are one of the most comprehensive available in marketing literature, but these definitions are open to interpretation and cannot be quantified; however the expression of these attributes can be compared relatively between mediums in some circumstances (Humphreys, 2016). For example, despite the lack of a quantifiable measure, it can be obvious to observers that Snapchat has less permeance than email based on the definition of permeance being 'how long the content of a message is available to users (Humphreys, 2016; Snap Inc, 2019). This combination of Aakers brand personality scale and Humphreys social media attributes could provide an answer to whether social media attributes do affect brand image.

There is no doubt then that the social media used for brand communication has a direct affect on the type of content that is used. We can often see how a brand whose desired message enacts the affordances of a particular type of content will gravitate towards a platform that also enacts the affordances of that message, rather than seeking out a platform because it aligns with the messaging they are trying to achieves. By identifying a relationship between social media affordance and brand image, organisations will be able to make more informed decisions about what social media to use, based on their desired brand image.

4 Research Philosophy

The study conducted by the researcher will aim to identify if by interacting with a brand through a particular social media platform if that brand image is affected by the affordances

of that platform. This puts brand image as the dependent variable with the affordances of the social media as the independent variable. The pragmatic approach argues it is possible to work with positivist methods as well as interpretivist methods and that the most important determinant of adopting research philosophy should be the research question (Saunders and Lewis, 2012). While this research question looks to obtain an understanding of a cause-effect relationship between two variables (a positivist approach), these two variables (brand image and affordances) are a nuance concept requiring use of interpretivistic methods to understand and quantify. This creates a situation in which multiple approaches and methods are required in order to fully answer the research question.

As such, this leads to a combination of the inductive and deductive approach to the subsequent research. Firstly, an inductive exploratory approach has been conducted in the form of a literature review to understand both phenomena and identify quantifiable variables within each; the interactions of each are then be tested in a deductive piece of quantitative work in the form of a survey study (Saunders and Phillip, 2012).

5. Research Strategy

The literature review conducted has created a basis for an accepted understanding of social media affordances and brand image in academic literature, Humphreys (2016) and Aaker (1997) provided a broad basis for each of these respectively. The combination of their two frameworks provides a way of measuring the effect of social media affordances on brand image. Through Humphreys (2016) a common set of affordances than can be applied to all social media platforms and through Aaker (2017) there is a robust method for measuring brand image.

A survey conducted by the researcher will aim to identify if by interacting with a brand through a particular social media platform if that brand image is affected by the affordances of that platform. This puts brand image as the dependent variable with the attributes of the medium as the independent variable. The chosen platforms will be controlled to display different key attributes. As previously mentioned it is not possible to quantify social media affordances in the absolute, therefore several social media will be used to create a relative scale in regards to these affordances.

To study the affect of every social media attribute would create a study with a size that would be outside the time and budget constraints of this study. Due to these limitations this study will focus on the two most important social media attributes mentioned in the literature, those being media richness and social presence (Fulk et al, 1987; Humphreys, 2016; Negretti, 1999). These two attributes have substantial overlap, which makes studying them in tandem almost essential as a change in one often involves a change in the other.

Each participant will be given one of three different recall task relating to a brand communication from a different medium, either email, Twitter, or Youtube (Video). Each respondent will then be asked to rate the brand on a set of brand image traits identified from Aakers (1997) brand personality questionnaire.

5.1 Hypotheses

The research question in this study relates to determining whether there is a significant relationship between the expression of media richness and social presence (as the independent variable) and a brand trait (the dependent variable). The hypotheses therefore are constructed in relation to the presence of this relationship between the independent and dependent variable, without predicting the affects of this (if any) interaction. In this case one hypothesis has been constructed which can be applied to each of the brand dimension traits within this study whereby T represents the brand trait.

H1 The expression of 'Media Richness' and 'Social Presence' in a brand message, does have a significant relationship with participants rating of T, in that brands image.

H0 The expression of 'Media Richness' and 'Social Presence' in a brand message, does not have a significant relationship with participants rating of T, in that brands image.

5.2 Recall Tasks

While each recall task will differ in the communication and channel used, the brand and marketing, campaign is to be consistent throughout. Displaying a consistent message across each recall task would be difficult to ensure without this control; a lack of this control could lead to the results of brand personality questions being a result of the message content, rather than the affordances of the medium used. By controlling this variable, the study can infer, with a significant degree of certainty, that the only changing variable between each study is the attributes of the communication channel used in each recall task.

5.2.1 The Case Study

The focus marketing campaign used in the recall tasks is the "This is Wells Fargo" campaign launched by Wells Fargo. The campaign was launched as an attempt to rebuild the Wells Fargo brand after a series of scandals, from which multiple fine and penalties were served against the organisation (The Financial Brand, 2019a). The scandals faced included the creations of fake accounts in customer names without their knowledge, improperly repossessing service members' cars, securities fraud allegations and various SEC fines; the list goes on (Wolff-Mann, 2019). These scandals take stretch as far back as 2016 with many still coming to light as recently as March 2019; with Wells Fargo CEO Tim Sloan testifying in front of the House Financial Services Committee's hearing "Holding Megabanks Accountable: An Examination of Wells Fargo's Pattern of Consumer Abuses" (Wolff-Mann, 2019).

Due to the nature of the scandals, and the way in which the Wells Fargo brand has been damaged, the "This is Wells Fargo" campaign focus' on several key areas aimed at rebuilding consumers' trust in the brand. Tim Sloan puts the goal of the campaign as to communicate that Wells Fargo is "transforming to provide easier, more personal and helpful solutions" (Business Wire, 2019). Along with an introduction of a revamped logo the campaign focus' on two main products, the newly developed "Control Tower" and the "Financial Health Bankers" (Business Wire, 2019). The ads created aim to highlight how people and technology

together create the human ingenuity needed to transform the Wells Fargo's customer experience (Business Wire, 2019).

The Control Tower is designed to be a central location for customers to manage all their financial connections, including turning cards on or off, view recurring payments and managing account access (Wells Fargo, 2019a). The control tower service allows customers to organise these services across all of their devices (Wells Fargo, 2019a). The financial health bankers are a team specialized at aiding account holders in reaching their savings or credit goals (Wells Fargo, 2019b). Available over the phone the team can help with tracking personal expenses, setting savings goals and managing debt (Wells Fargo, 2019b).

5.2.2 Survey 1

The brand communication in recall task in the first survey will seek to display the lowest expression of social presence and media richness in the overall study. Therefore, an email communication will be featured in this recall task. Email traditionally has low media richness using mostly text based messaging with embedded pictures, although this is limited (Xavier (2017). With a distinct lack of video, temporal structure or co-creation present (in addition to being hampered by a lack of media richness) email also has the lowest social presence out of the social media showcased in the surveys (Fulk et al., 1987; Humphreys, 2016; Xavier, 2017). The efforts shown by users to expand the social presence in emails by using features not intended by its creators (i.e., developing emojis) also reflects the lack of features to express social presence in the core design of the medium (Fulk et al., 1987; Negretti 1999). Expression of richness is also obviously very low, due to a lack of media rich elements and an overall focus on text based messaging. The actual content of the email relates to the control tower services and was emailed to Wells Fargo customers to explain how to use the service, along with some relevant contact information. The full content of this email can be found in appendix 1

5.2.3 Survey 2

The recall task in survey two aims to display a level of expression of social presence and media richness in the middle ground between survey 1 and survey 3. A selection of tweets from the Wells Fargo campaign have been used to achieve this, with the justifications for this residing in the core design characteristics of the medium and the content of the message itself. Tweets allow the use of text and images similarly to email however the selection of tweets uses images more frequently and more prominently than the email communication; leading to a higher expression of media richness (Daft and Lengel, 1986; Humphreys, 2016; Xavier, 2017). While these additional images also add to social presence (i.e., creating greater expression of tone in the message) Twitter's design features also allow for a higher expression of social presence (Kietzmann, 2011; Humphreys, 2016). By displaying the number of "comments", "retweets" and "likes" Twitter showcases how these messages exist in a non-dyadic space; this gives users greater information as to the reception of this messaging in the wider social context and as such adds to the social presence in the message (Perez, 2019; Twitter, 2019). In traditional psychology, it is widely accepted that people can

be influenced when this wider social context is present with issues such as conformity and social pressure, altering the reception or reaction to particular messaging (Cialdini, 1993). The opportunity for this influence is not present in email as email is dyadic in nature. Screenshots of this recall task can be found in appendix 1.

5.2.4 Survey 3

The recall task in survey 3 has been selected to display the brand communication with the highest social presence and media richness, as such a video message from the Wells Fargo YouTube channel has been used. The communication follows a couple who are customers of Wells Fargo and are making use of the new products introduced during the 'This is Wells Fargo Campaign', showcasing them using the new control tower app as well as making use of the free financial health bankers service (Wells Fargo, 2019c). It is obvious that this video message affords much higher media richness than the text and image based messaging used in the previous recall tasks however, this additional media richness also leads to additional social presence (Daft & Lengel, 1986; Daft and Macintosh, 1981). Through the use of video messaging a greater sense of tone and emotion can be conveyed, through the use of various audio cues (music, sound effects etc.) actor emotion and overall imagery; which is all underpinned by this greater affordance of media richness (Daft & Lengel, 1986; Daft and Macintosh, 1981; Humphreys 2016). A link to the video used in this recall task can be found in appendix 1.

5.3 Brand Personality Questions

The brand personality questions in this study are taken from Aakers (1997) original dimensions and attributes; as established in the literature review deviating from these original dimensions can raise issues with the relevance of the attributes in the study (Azoulay and Kapferer, 2003). These questions will follow the recall task and participants will be asked to answer the questions based on the brand communication displayed in the recall task. Participants will be asked to (based on the recall task) rate how much each trait describes the Wells Fargo brand, 1 being 'not at all descriptive' with 5 'being extremely descriptive'. Using a numbered scale stops participants being biased to any particular label and allows them to answer more honestly rather than favouring particular labels due to their familiarity or extremeness (Weijters et al, 2013).

5.4 Control

Each of the three questionnaires given to participant's remains the exact same except for a different recall task in each. The case study for these recall tasks has been chosen due to its suitability in displaying a consistent message across each platform and its ability to highlight messaging across different social media.

The suitability of this campaign as the main case study for use in the recall tasks is down to two main characteristics of the campaign, besides the freshness of the launch of the campaign given that it was implemented in 2019 (Business Wire, 2019; Paperflite, 2019). The first being that the campaign was implemented across a range of digital communication and social

media channels (The Financial Brand, 2019a; Papeflite, 2019). This gave the researcher access to messaging across multiple mediums that were suitable for creating the scale of increasing expression of social presence and media richness between mediums.

The second characteristic is the narrowness of the campaign with a clear focus on two main products and a well defined aim (rebuilding customer trust) , reduces the diversity of the messaging across each communication channel (The Financial Brand, 2019a; Wells Fargo, 2019a; Wells Fargo 2019b). This narrow focus ensures the intended message across each channel is consistent, and provides part of the control between each study. The message this campaign seeks to communicate is also fits with the scope of the study, as the entire point of the campaign is to rebuild the Wells Fargo Brand image (The Financial Brand, 2019a; Wells Fargo, 2019a; Wells Fargo 2019b).

5.5 Sampling and Distribution

Non-probability sampling will be conducted due to not having an adequate way to randomly select members from a large enough population to create a significant sample size (Saunders and Lewis 2012). The study will keep all gender and age splits, between surveys, within a 10% margin with all participants over the age of 18, as including under 18s would require additional ethical considerations (Saunders and Lewis, 2012). This study does not consider that different demographics have varying interactions with social media (Millennials vs Baby Boomers) further research would be required to study the effects of the phenomenon across different demographic groups. (Mcgrath, 2018). As such, data analysis will not consider the effects of gender, age, household income ethnicity etc on the results given in the surveys with age and gender the only demographic controls present. In ensuring consistent age and gender, groups in each survey the researcher can rule out these demographics in affecting the comparison of each study.

The survey was constructed using Qualtrics and will be distributed across social media as well as via Amazons Mechanical Turk. The Amazon MTurk is a Crowd Sourcing website that allows users hire remote 'crowd workers' to perform simple online tasks, and has the capabilities to recruit participants for simple online surveys (Amazon, 2019). The platform provides the capabilities to generate a high enough return rate within the budget and time constraints of the study, as well as maintaining a consistent return rate and demographic spread across each survey (Amazon, 2019). These controls are necessary in order to maintain reliability in comparing the results of each survey.

6. Results

In total 152 participants took part in the total study with 72 Males and 79 Females, with 1 participant who preferred not to reveal their gender. 7 participants were 21 or under, 60 22-25's, 37 26-39's and 47 were 30 or older (1 participant omitted there age from the study. See table 1 in appendix 2 for a breakdown of the demographics present in each group of survey respondents). Participants were told that they would be answering a survey, designed to assess brand image perceptions based on a particular marketing communication. Participants were then shown one of the 3 recall tasks constructed from the 'This is Wells Fargo

campaign, and were asked to rank several adjectives on their appropriateness in describing the Wells Fargo brand based on the communication. This was done via a 1 to 5 Likert scaled with participants told that 1 = not descriptive at all with 5 = Extremely descriptive. There were 15 adjectives in total each from Aakers (1997) brand personality scale, see appendix 2 for full list.

This section breaks down the results of each dimension and trait in the study with the resulting analysis, and how this changes across each survey. The level of expression of Social Presence and Media Richness is the independent variable or y and is referred to as such throughout. In each survey, the replies were analysed to develop mean ratings for each brand personality trait or dimension and to develop a radar chart of the Wells Fargo brand image. Radar charts are used as a visual representation of brand image as they can easily reflect how closely a brands image aligns with each of the brand personality dimensions (Aaker, 1997; Singh and Sonnenburg, 2012; Xiang and Fesenmaier, 2016). The various charts developed as a result of this study can be found in appendix 2.

A regression analysis was also conducted to test the hypotheses and to determine if there was a statistically significant relationship present between the dependent variables (brand personality traits) and the independent variable (expression of social presence and media richness). This was done using a combination of Microsoft Excel and SPSS, with the significant threshold value set at $P > 0.05$. In order to quantify the expression of Media Richness and Social Presence in each recall task, each brand communication was given a rating of 1 to 3 based on the expression of these attributes; 1 being a low expression of each attribute with 3 being a high expression of the attributes. In doing so, the number of each survey coincides with its rating for attribute expression i.e. attribute expression of survey 1 = 1. While a relative scale this quantifying was necessary in order to calculate correlation and significance between the independent and dependent variables.

In order to obtain a rating for each dimension, from each survey, the mean ratings of the traits in that dimension were calculated and then the mean rating of these ratings was used as the rating for the dimension. For example, the mean of the ratings for the Upper-class and Charming traits in survey 1 was used as the rating for the Sophistication dimension in survey 1, i.e. $(\text{Upper-class Mean Rating} \times \text{Charming Mean Rating}) / 2 = \text{Sophistication Rating}$. However, in calculating the correlation of each dimensions rating with the independent variable, the mean rating of each trait in that dimension was used; as the 3 ratings for the dimensions from each survey are not enough to accurately calculate correlation. For a full break down of the values calculated for each dimension and trait see table 2 in appendix 2.

6.1 Key Findings

Of the 15 traits present in the study just 4 were considered to have a statistically significant relationship with the independent variable (with this threshold set at $P < 0.05$), 'Down-to-Earth' ($P=0.001$), 'Honest' ($P=0.007$), 'Cheerful' ($P=0.002$) and 'Up-to-Date' ($P=0.021$). 3 out of 4 of these traits were part of the Sincerity dimension, which therefore had a significant relationship with y, with a p-value of 0.03. This dimension was the only dimension to have a

strong positive correlation (0.774) with the independent variable, with theories given in the conclusion as to the cause of this relationship.

'Up-to-date' was the only trait with a significant relationship to y outside of the Sincerity dimension. It is likely the main cause of the significant p-value for the excitement dimension as it is the only trait to have this value within Excitement. This could mean that the affect of social media attributes could have overlapping effects across different brand personality dimensions. It may also provide an argument for 'up-to-date's inclusion in the Sincerity dimension rather than the excitement dimension.

The highest rated dimension in the survey was competence, with a mean rating of 3.60, and the lowest rated was Ruggedness with a mean rating of 2.90. Neither of these dimensions had a significant p-value and so, it is likely participants had very defined perceptions of these traits in the Wells Fargo brand regardless of the medium in the recall task.

6.2 Survey Results Breakdown

6.2.1 Sincerity

The rating of sincerity positively correlated with the expression of both social media attributes, ranking lowest in survey 1 at 3.2 but gradually increasing to 3.4 and 3.7 in survey 2 and survey 3 respectively. Overall, this dimension had the strongest correlation with the independent variable, with a correlation of 0.774 and as such showed the biggest increase in rating as social presence and media richness increased.

While the down-to-earth trait had a slight positive correlation with the independent variable (with an r-value of 0.270) the results of the regression analysis found that the p-value= 0.001. This trait therefore has a statistically significant relationship with the independent variable. The honest trait was ranked similarly to the down-to-earth trait and had a weak positive correlation with the independent variable with an r-value of 0.23. This trait also had a statistically significant relationship with the independent variable with a p value of 0.007. Despite having the strongest positive correlation of the Sincerity traits (albeit still weak, with r=0.083), the Wholesome trait had a p value of 0.302 and therefore had no statistically significant relationship with the independent variable. The last trait in the Sincerity dimension, Cheerful had similar results to the first two traits where the r-value= 0.25 and the p-value= 0.002, therefore this trait also had strong relationship with the expression of Social Presence and Media Richness.

6.2.2 Excitement

This dimension had a very slight positive correlation with the independent variable with an r-value of 0.120. This dimension was second lowest rated in survey 1 with a rating of 3.16 and was the lowest rated in surveys 2 and 3 with scores of 3.25 and 3.32 respectively.

Daring is one of only two attributes in the entire study to have a negative correlation with the independent variable, with an r-value of -0.045. Further analysis showed this trait had no significant relationship with a p-value of 0.291. Both the spirited and imaginative traits had a

weak positive correlation with the independent variable however; both also had no significant relationship with p-values of 0.679 and 0.819 respectively. up-to-date was the only trait outside of the Sincerity dimension to have a significant relationship with the independent variable. For this trait $p = 0.021$, with a weak positive correlation whereby $R=0.207$.

6.2.3 Competence

Similar to 'Excitement', 'Competence' had a very weak positive correlation with the independent variable with an r-value of 0.146. Its rating peaked at 3.7 in survey 2 however remained at 3.5 for both survey 1 and survey 3. Despite each trait in this dimension (reliable, intelligent and successful) having a positive r-value the p-value of each showed that no trait in the competence dimension had significant relationship with y. With the highest rating in the study but an insignificant p-value it can be theorised that participants had a strong perception of this trait in Wells Fargo, regardless of the medium showcased in the recall task.

6.2.4 Sophistication

This dimension has the second highest positive correlation in the study, for this dimension, with an r-value of 0.64 indicating strong positive correlation with the independent variable. Both traits within the Sophistication dimension also had positive correlation with y, albeit weak, with Upper-class $R=0.069$ and for Charming $R=0.018$. Both traits had a weak statistical relationship with y, with p-values of 0.398 and 0.828 respectively. This led to the sophistication dimension also having no significant relationship with y, with a p-value of 0.468.

6.2.5 Ruggedness

Ruggedness was the only dimension in the study to show a negative correlation with the independent variables, whereby the r-value for this dimension equalled -0.622. This was the lowest rated dimension in all 3 surveys. Of the two traits in this dimension Outdoorsy showed a weak positive correlation with y, ($R= 0.112$) whereas Tough had a negative correlation with y ($R= -0.120$). Neither of these dimensions had a statistically significant relationship with y, with p-values of 0.168 and 0.142 respectively. Ruggedness had the lowest rating in the study, and with an insignificant p-value it is likely participants did not associate with Wells Fargo regardless of medium.

7. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine the presence of a significant relationship between social media affordances in brand messaging and the subsequent brand image that consumers derived from this messaging. An extensive literature review was first conducted in order to understand the current literature on both variables (affordances and brand image) and to obtain a robust method for measuring both variables in order to compare the affect that one (social media affordances) would have on the other (brand image) via a quantitative study.

It was determined that social media affordances cannot be categorised directly (due to the limitless and unpredictable nature of affordances) and so one has to observe the attributes of

the media as these are the core determinants of affordances (Gibson, 2015; Humphreys, 2016; Koroleva and Kane, 2017; Yang, 2017). Humphreys' (2016) six social media attributes were determined to be the most appropriate to apply within this research context, due to their recognition within the literature and available application across all platforms, these were social presence, media richness, temporal structure, permeance, mobility and replicability. Due to budget and time constraints present, the ensuing quantitative study would focus on the most important attributes rather than trying to study the effects of all six. As such, social presence and media richness became the focus of the study as the literature review determined these to be the most important attributes of social media (Daft & Lengel, 1986; Daft and Macintosh, 1981; Humphreys, 2016; Fulk et al, 1987). However, current literature was unable to provide a robust method for quantifying these attributes, and so the quantitative study was developed in a way that allowed for a comparative measure that would allow these attributes to be quantified relatively when analysing their affect on brand image.

Literature on brand image is more diverse than that on social media affordances as the concept has been studied for much longer within academia. As such, the researcher was able to uncover a robust method for measuring brand image in Aakers (1997) brand personality scale. This method was deeply rooted in marketing literature and despite its critiques it was determined to be one of the most reliable methods for measuring consumers perception of brand image; therefore it was used as the method to measure the dependent variable in this study (Azouley and Kapferer, 2003; Greenhalgh, 2017; Hosany et al, 2006; Mizik and Jacobson, 2005). The method developed from Aakers (1997) is to show participants a brand communication and then ask them to rate the appropriateness of several adjectives/traits in describing this brand, this shows the strength of five brand personality dimensions in that brands image: sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness.

The resulting quantitative study made up of 3 separate surveys, asked participants to view one of three recall task featuring a brand communication and then rate that brands image using Aaker's (1997). Each recall task showed a different brand communication from the 'This is Wells Fargo' campaign, each with a different level of media richness and social presence; as categorised by Humphreys (2016). The suitability of the case study was due to its implementation across a range of different social media and its defined focus in re-building the Wells Fargo brand image (The Financial Brand, 2019a; Wells Fargo, 2019a; Wells Fargo 2019b).

Developing each recall task from a single campaign from a single brand, in this case Wells Fargo, is essential in order to keep the messaging consistent in each recall task in order to rule out this variable affecting participant answers. Due to the inability to effectively quantify each attribute the communications were chosen to create an increasing scale of expression of each attribute. In doing so the expression of each attribute could be quantified relatively with each recall task given a rating of 1 to 3 based on this level of expression each attribute i.e. survey 1 showcased low media richness and social presence therefore it was given a rating of 1. This formed the comparative scale with which to measure the affect of these attributes on the answers given in the brand personality questionnaire.

Results of each survey were collected and analysed to provide mean ratings for each dimension and trait within each survey. Consumers' perception of the Wells Fargo brand could then be compared based on the recall task they viewed. The answers in the brand personality test varied across each survey with each trait and dimension correlating differently with the independent variable. A regression analysis was therefore conducted to determine the presence of any significant links between the independent and dependent variables and in doing so test the hypotheses proposed by the research question.

Through a linear regression analysis of the answers participants gave in each study, 4 of the 15 dependent variables within the study were determined to have a statistically significant relationship with the expression of social presence and media richness in the recall task. Down-to-Earth, Honest, Cheerful and Up-to-Date each had a resulting p-value of less than 0.05 therefore the null hypothesis can be rejected for each of these traits. These results therefore show that the social media affordances present in brand messaging does affect the reception of that messaging, and alters the receivers' perception of that brands image. This raises more questions than it answers and potentially opens up a new area of study to understand how this variation is caused by these affordances and what this means for academics and practitioners alike.

7.1 Limitations

7.1.1 Demographic Affects

The wider academic literature on brand image recognise that different demographic factors can affect how consumers receive brand messaging, affecting their perception of brand image (Biel, 1993; Sirgy, 1982, Wood, 2000). Particularly across different cultures, as brand personality traits may not be as robust to these differences as human personality traits (Aaker and Maheswaran 1997; Paunonen et al. 1992). Aaker (1997) accounts for this by ensuring her sample population reflecting the overall demographic of the US population (as this is where participants were drawn from). This included measures to balance various demographic factors including education, age and income. Demographic factors are also widely credited within the literature on social media affordances as playing a role in how these affordances are recognised/received by social media users. Both socio-economic status and age are considered to be large factors in determining the dexterity users have with technology (Aaker and Durairaj, 1997; Fulk et al, 1987; Koroleva and Kane, 2017). A particularly good example which highlights the implications of this phenomenon within the context of this study, is the difficulty older users have in detecting social presence; particularly in messages with low media richness (Karimi and Neustaedter, 2011). This study does not include these demographic controls; further study would be required to understand how the results of this study might vary depending on different demographic factors.

7.1.2 Quantifying Social Media Attributes

Academic literature on social media attributes is still very much in its infancy. Humphreys (2016) has provided a robust set of attributes that can be applied across all social media however, this provides no way to quantify these attributes with the wider literature yet to also

provide an answer to this (Bughin and Chui, 2010; Dubois, 2010; Gibbs et al, 2013 Humphreys 2016; Van Dijck 2009). Without a reliable method to objectively quantify social media attributes this study has been limited to using a relative numerical scale rather than an absolute scale. This limits the effectiveness of any statistical analysis that is conducted and leaves progress to be made in understanding the statistical relationship between social media affordance and brand image. This makes it difficult to accurately make predictions about the interactions between social media affordances and brand image in contexts outside of this study.

7.1.3 Narrow Recall Task Context

The interaction between the independent and dependent variables within this study, has only been considered within one very specific business context, this being the 'This is Wells Fargo' campaign. As has been demonstrated across business literature; the affects of new technology on traditional marketing theory can only be fully understand when studied across a range of different business or industry contexts (Bughin and Chui, 2010; Dubois, 2010; Yang, 2019; Jeffrey and Leonardi, 2013). The scope of this study did not include considerations for analysing the research question within different business context, although this study could be easily altered in future to do so; i.e. replicating the study to use different recall tasks to test the affects when using business' from different industries. Early literature on social media also frequently cites context as an implication in the positive or negative effects of their affordances, although these are still not fully understood, and it remains unclear the implications this could have within this research context (Fox and Moreland, 2015; Pearce and Vitak (2015),

8. Conclusion

The objective of this study was to identify the presence of a casual relationship between the social media affordances present in brand messaging and the brand image perceived by consumers. The results of this study do indicate there is a relationship present between these variables with the rejection of the null hypothesis for 4 of the 15 dependent variables present in the study. An explanation for traits where the null hypothesis could not be rejected may due to those attributes not being a part of the intended brand image. These could also be defined characteristics of the brand or easy to identify, i.e. Ruggedness is not a part of brand messaging and so the attributes of the medium had no effect on the perception of this trait.

The ratings of the Down-to-earth, Honest, Cheerful and up-to-date traits, were all determined to have a statistically significant relationship with the level of media richness and social presence in the recall task. All of these traits besides the latter were part of the Sincerity dimension. This dimension was the only one of Aakers (1997) five brand dimensions found to have both a strong positive correlation ($R=0.77$) and significance ($P= 0.03$) with the independent variable. The researcher puts forward two theories, for consideration in future studies, as to the explanation behind this cause-effect relationship. Either 'The level of social presence and media richness make brand messaging clearer' or 'The level of social presence

and media richness in brand messaging enhances the sincerity brand personality dimension in brand messaging.

8.1 Theory 1

“The level of social presence and media richness in brand messaging makes the brand messaging clearer”.

This theory suggests that as these attributes increase in expression so does the clarity of the message. This is based on fact that all traits with a p-value of less than 0.05 could be used in describing the revamped brand image the 'This is Wells Fargo' campaign was trying to create. Consumers had lost faith in the brand amidst several scandals, and in the organisations own words they were trying to rebuild a brand that could be considered 'trustworthy', 'contemporary' and 'more personal' (Business Wire, 2019; The Financial Brand, 2019a; Wolff-Mann, 2019). Generating this brand message would lead to higher expressions of sincerity in the brand image, and so greater clarity in this message should lead to greater expression of this dimension (Rutter, 2013; Naresh, 2012; Snyder 2003). More social presence, means more social cues which, at their core, relay more information to message receivers, while the level of media richness refers to the overall amount of sensory information being relayed (Daft & Lengel, 1986; Daft and Macintosh, 1981; Humphreys, 2016; Fulk et al, 1987). At their core, both of these attributes relate to the relaying of information from the message sender to the receiver. As such, it could be possible that these attributes simply exaggerate messaging, as receivers get more information they are able to understand the message more clearly; this leads to stronger opinions about brand image in line with the messaging.

8.2 Theory 2

"The level of social presence and media richness in brand messaging enhances the Sincerity brand personality dimension in brand messaging"

This theory suggests that the expression of social media attributes will affect the expression of particular traits or dimensions in a brand image. In the context of this study this theory suggest that as the level of media richness and social presence increases in brand messaging so, does the expression of the sincerity dimension within brand image. Social cues are used to convey agreeableness and authenticity, so it is possible as social presence (social cues and information) increase, it enhances the expression of the sincerity dimension in a brands personality (Rutter, 2013; Snyder 2003). Sincerity was the only dimension to have a strong positive correlation with the independent variable with an r-value of 0.77. Despite the sincerity dimension, having a significant P-value the study was unable to reject the null hypothesis for the 'wholesome' trait this may be a result of the context of the study, i.e. the wholesome trait is rarely used in describing banks. Conversely the opposite is true of the 'up-to-date' trait as it falls outside of the sincerity trait but it is a connotation of the financial industry for brands to appear contemporary (The Financial Brand, 2019a).

9. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study the researcher makes several recommendations for, both academics and practitioners; relating to the direct implications of these results as well as potential questions it asks of the traditional theory surrounding marketing.

9.1 Academics

9.1.1 Further Study

The main recommendations for future study revolve around testing the 2 theories suggested by this research, that seek to explain the relationship uncovered between both variables. A study with a much larger scope would be required, with the researcher recommending the replication of the current study but across multiple different contexts (business, industry etc). Testing these theories may provide a clearer answer as to the affect media richness and social presence has on brand image, or at the very least, it can rule out each of these theories.

In this regard, the researcher recommends replicating this study multiple times using different business' and marketing campaigns with different intended messages; with the 3 media used in each study kept consistent for control (i.e. Email, Twitter and Video). This then presents the same data produced in this study while making it possible to see how the affects change when different brand messaging is incorporated.

Testing theory 1 would include an additional step in the study, which would relate to identifying the intended brand imaged that is being communicated in each set of recall tasks. While this study included that somewhat in identifying the intended message in the 'This is Wells Fargo' campaign, this was not done using Aaker's brand personality framework. The resulting study would have to include this step in order to be more robust in comparing the messaging of multiple campaigns. However in doing, it could be determined as to whether higher expressions of both attributes leads to participants answers in the brand personality survey being more closely mirroring those intended by the campaign.

If the Sincerity dimension is again significantly correlated with the expression of social presence and media richness, regardless of intended messaging then future study can move towards more depth testing of theory 2. This would also suggest then, that particular social media attributes have particular affects on brand image traits. It may also be possible that this effect overlaps across multiple dimensions, as shown in this study with the significance of the up-to-date trait, which was outside of the sincerity dimension.

9.1.2 Development of a model to quantify affordances

One of the largest hurdle present in this study is the lack of a robust method for quantifying social media attributes. Humphreys (2016) has made great strides in categorising social media attributes however, the lack of a quantifiable scale drastically limits the understanding that could be made in the relationship between social media attributes and perceived brand image. A relative scale for these attributes had to be adopted over an absolute scale in this study but an absolute scale would give this study quantifiable results that could be applied to

other contexts allowing researcher to develop more comprehensive hypotheses about the interactions between these variables (Caliandro and Gandini, 2017). The development of a framework to quantify these attributes would also be necessary for the more robust statistical analyse needed to test the theories presented by this study. No doubt, the current literature on social media affordances/attributes is still in its infancy and it likely some way from achieving this. However, this challenge will most certainly be overcome as brand image was once the most nuanced subject in marketing literature taking decades before a quantifiable scale was developed. While not without its criticisms Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale is widely regarded as a reliable and robust method for quantifying brand image (Aaker et al 2004; Altschiller, 2000; Azoulay and Kapferer, 2003; Chandon, 2003; Plummer, 1985). Until the same can be done for social media attributes there remains much nuance surrounding the biggest medium of the 21st century and its implications for brand messaging (Dann and Dann, 2011; Humphreys, 2016; King, 2018; Rowles, 2014; Ryan, 2016).

9.2 Practitioners

Direct practical applications of the results of this study are difficult to accurately predict due to the results giving rise to more questions than they answer, but they do show there is potential for marketers to use the attributes of social media to their advantage in developing brand image. How marketers can take advantage of this relationship is still unclear and will only become fully understood with further study either practically or academically.

If theory 1 is true marketers need to ensure their messaging is crystal clear on social media with low media richness and social presence as messages on these platforms are less clear; without consideration of this brand messages risk becoming flat. Messages developed for platforms with high levels of both attributes need more care in their production as any misinterpretation could be exaggerated, therefore becoming damaging to brand image. However, the proving of this theory would mean brands should try to exploit social media with high social presence and media richness to enhance the clarity of brand messaging. This would provide justification for focusing marketing budget on social media with high levels of both attributes (as this enhances brand messaging), without the need for extensive consumer research through each platform.

Theory 2 presents a different scenario whereby brands should cherry pick social media that enacts the affordances, which supports the intended brand image. For example as suggested by the results of this study, brands that seek to align with the sincerity dimension should seek to use social media with high levels of media richness and social presence. As shown in each survey participants ranked the Wells Fargo brand lower on sincerity when the recall task showcased messaging with low levels of social presence and media richness. While the affects of each attribute on brand dimensions is yet unclear, this area of study could inform brands in what proportions they should use social media for their messaging; i.e using a combination of social media with attributes that also proportionally enhance the brands personality dimensions for the intended brand image.

These results and theories do support the fact that brands can develop their image with a quality over quantity strategy, regardless of the brand image they are trying to achieve. Previously this strategy was largely only used by apparitional brands, but the results of this study show it is possible to exploit certain social media attributes to exaggerate particular brand personality traits. Brands could potentially create more defined brand images through the inclusion of social media attributes in their messaging that enhance the desired brand image. How this will work in a practical sense is still unclear and requires further testing of this interaction, but this possibility is shown to be present and supports the quality side of the quality vs quantity debate. This side of the argument continues to develop as usage of social media in everyday life increases and as this trend develops, the avenue of study opened up by this research may become pivotal in the fight to develop brand image without overwhelming consumers. There is potential for less to could to become more in building a brand online.

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Appendix

Appendix 1 – Recall Tasks

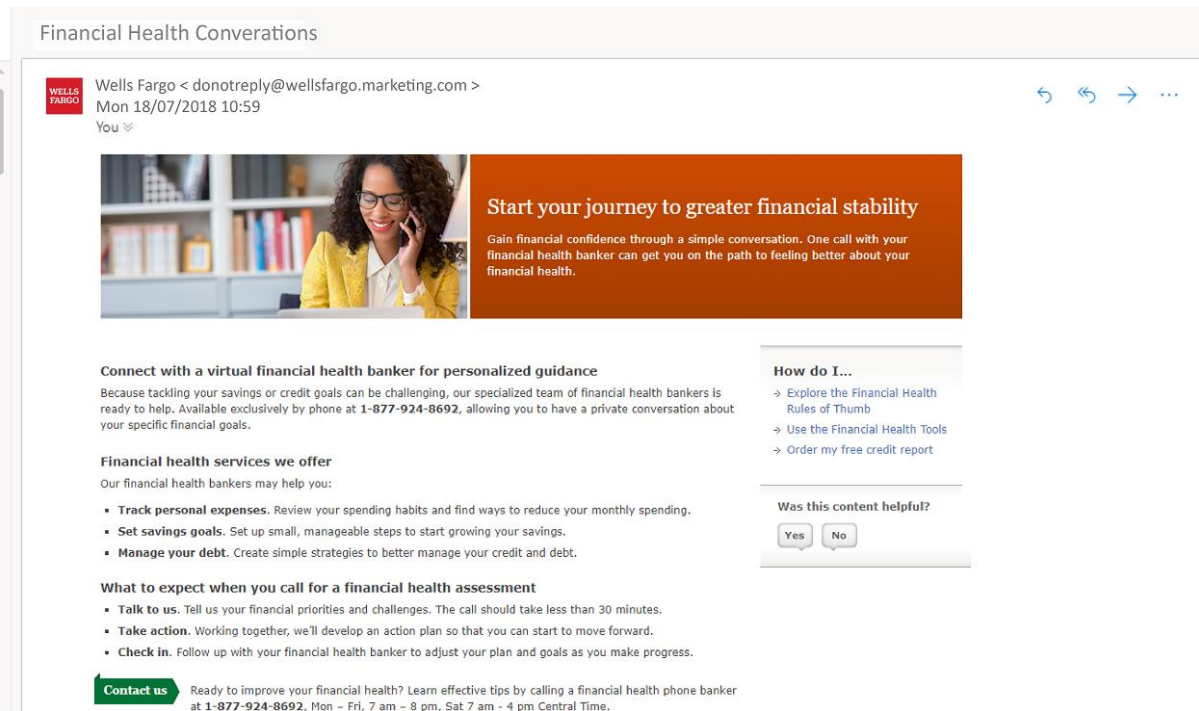
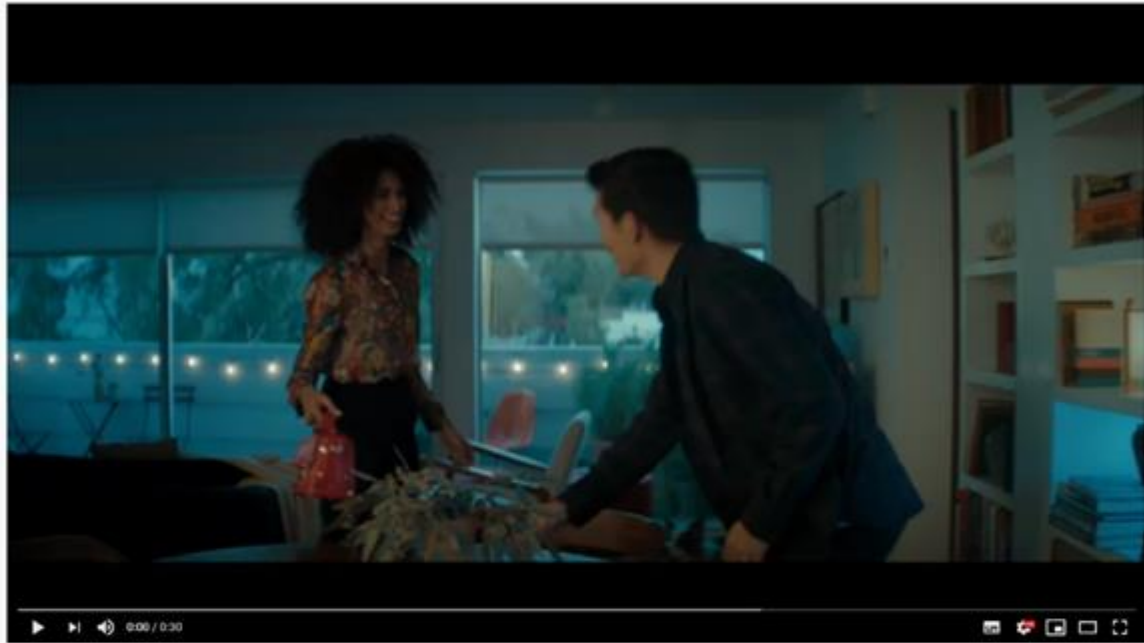


Figure 2 Wells Fargo Financial Health Services Email. Used in the recall task for Survey 1



Figure 1 Wells Fargo Financial Health Services Tweets. Used in the recall task for Survey 2.



This is the A-Team. This is Financial Health Conversations from Wells Fargo.

62,514 views

LIKE DISLIKE SHARE % SAVE ...

Figure 1 'This is the A-Team. This is Financial Health Conversations from Wells Fargo'. Used in the recall task for Survey 3. To see full video go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ry9Ugw0S4aA>

Appendix 2 – Survey Results

	Total Respondents	Male	Female	21 and un	22-25	26-29	30+
Survey 1	48	42%	58%	4.20%	43.75%	27.08%	25%
Survey 2	52	48%	51%	3.80%	38.46%	23.07%	36.50%
Survey 3	51	52%	48%	5.80%	37.25%	23.07%	31.37%

Table 1 Breakdown of survey participants based on age and gender.

<i>Trait</i>	<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Correlation</i>	<i>P-Value</i>
	Sincerity	3.48	0.774	0.03
Down-to Earth		3.20	0.270	0.001
Honest		3.60	0.230	0.007
Wholesome		3.51	0.083	0.302
Cheerful		3.60	0.250	0.002
	Excitement	3.25	0.120	0.041
Daring		2.75	-0.045	0.291
Spirited		3.31	0.056	0.679
Imaginative		3.21	0.062	0.819
Up-to-Date		3.72	0.207	0.021
	Competence	3.60	0.146	0.767
Reliable		3.55	0.013	0.876
Intelligent		3.69	0.037	0.652
Successful		3.54	0.058	0.981
	Sophistication	3.34	0.640	0.468
Upperclass		3.36	0.069	0.398
Charming		2.50	0.018	0.828
	Ruggedness	2.90	-0.622	0.226
Outdoorsy		3.08	0.112	0.168
Tough		2.72	-0.120	0.142

Table 2 Correlation and significance of the survey results with the independent variable.

Appendix 2.1 – Brand Personality Results by Traits (Radar Charts)

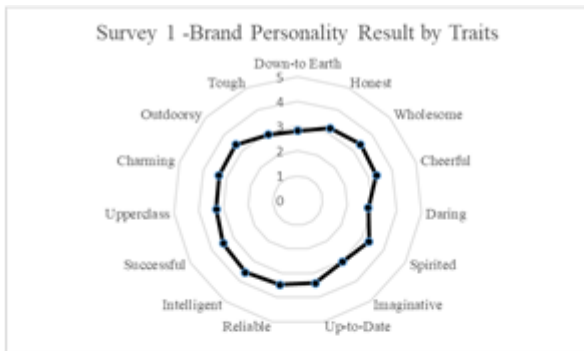


Table 3.1 Survey 1 brand personality results by traits (Radar Chart)



Table 1.2 Survey 2 brand personality results by traits (Radar Chart)



Table 3.3 Survey 3 brand personality results by traits (Radar Chart)

Appendix 2.2 - Brand Personality Results by Traits (Bar Charts)

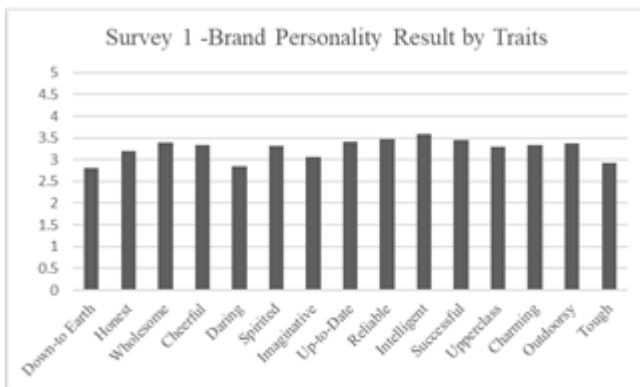


Table 4.1 Survey 1 brand personality result by traits (Bar Chart)

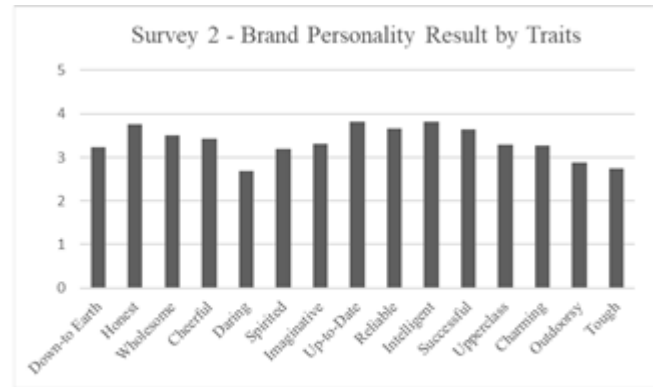


Table 4.2 Survey 2 brand personality results by traits (Bar Chart)

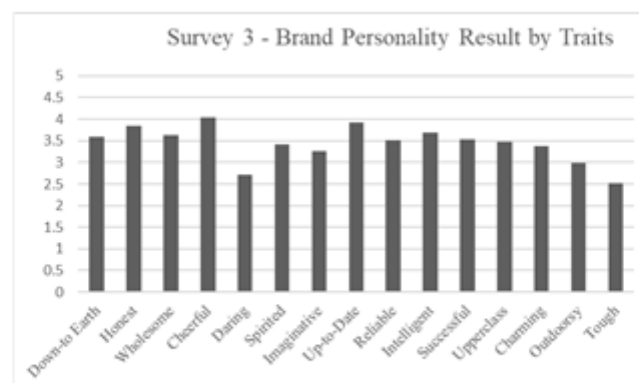


Table 1.3 Survey 3 brand personality results by traits (Bar Chart)

Appendix 2.3 Brand personality results by dimensions (Radar Charts)

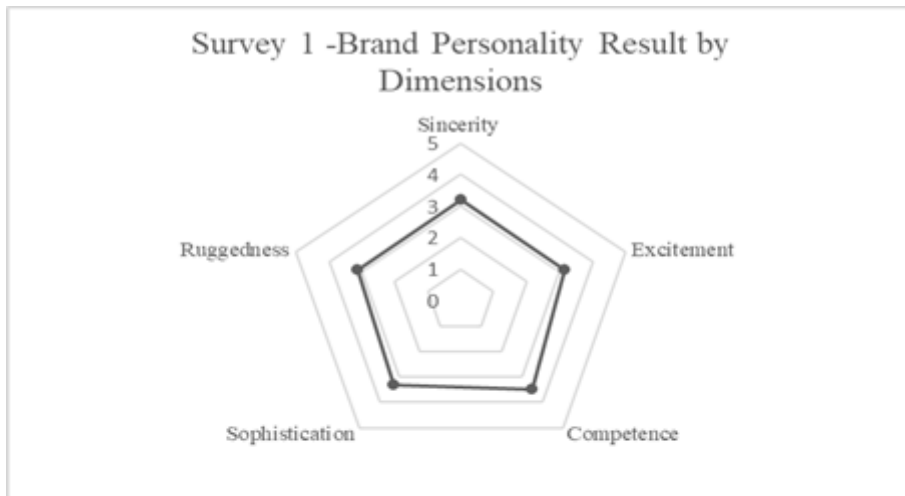


Table 5.1 Survey 1 brand personality results by dimensions (Radar Chart)



Table 1.2 Survey 2 brand personality results by dimensions (Radar Chart)

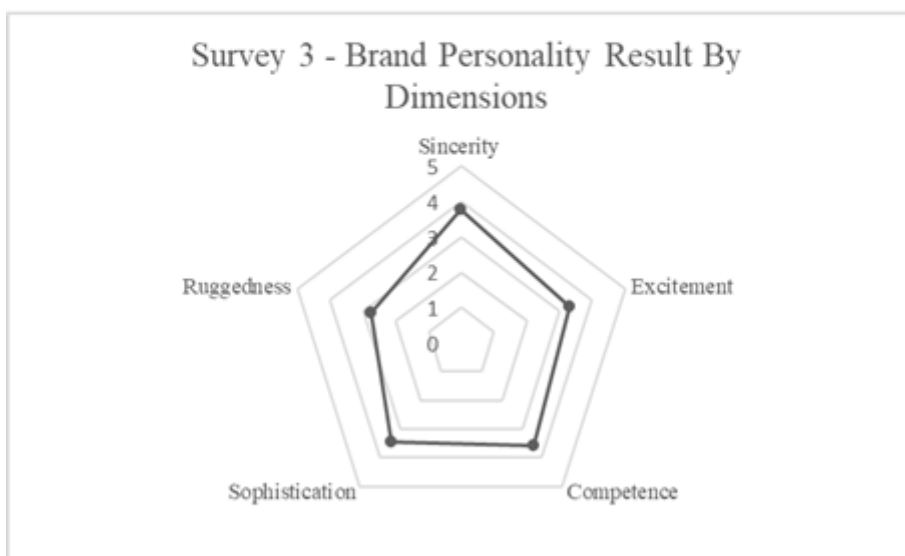


Table 5.3 Survey 3 brand personality results by dimensions (Radar Chart)

Appendix 2.4 Brand personality results by dimensions (Bar Charts)

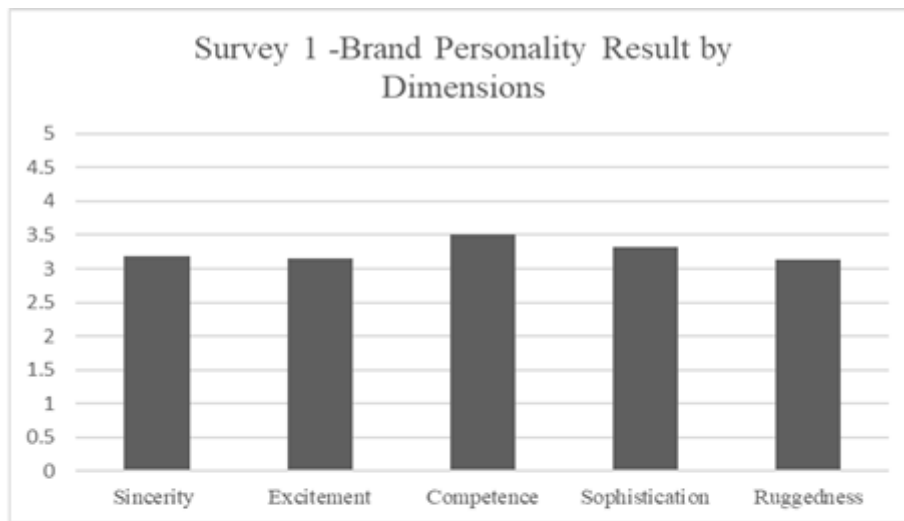


Table 6.1 Survey 1 brand personality results by dimensions (Bar Chart)

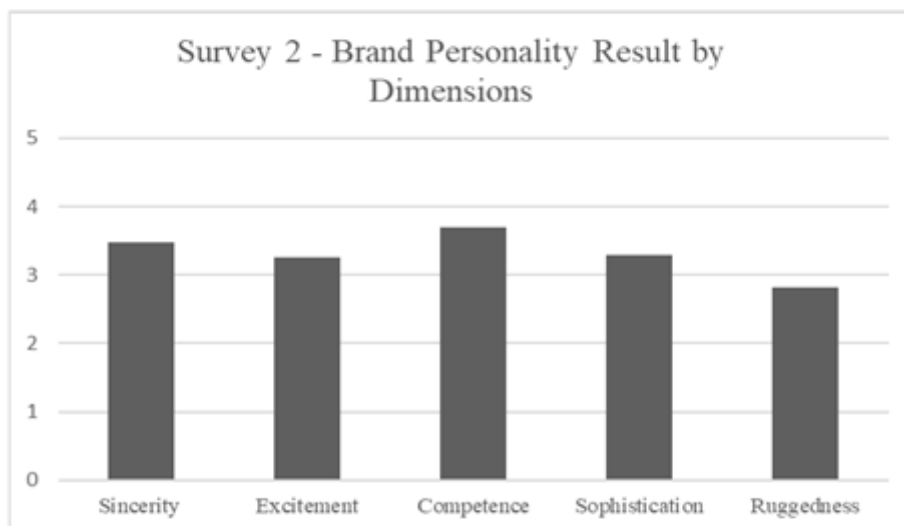


Table 6.2 Survey 2 brand personality results by dimensions (Bar Chart)

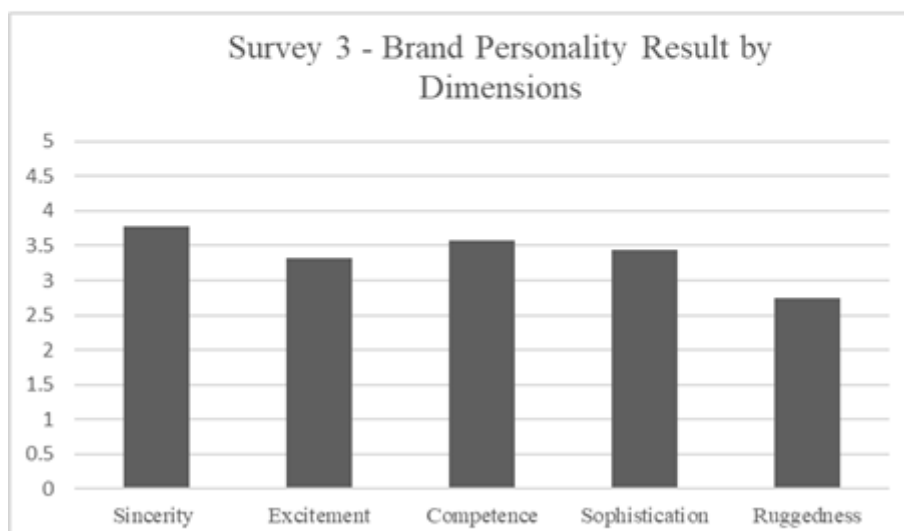


Table 1.3 Survey 3 brand personality results by dimensions (Bar Chart)