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**Dr. Shobha Pandey**

Assistant Professor, Department  
of Business Administration,  
L.S.M. Government Post  
Graduate College, Pithoragarh,  
Uttarakhand, India

**Dr. Ruchita Pangriya**

Assistant Professor, Department  
of Business, Laxman Singh  
Mahar Campus, Singh Jeena  
University, Uttarakhand, India

## Perception evaluation of selected social media platforms

**Dr. Shobha Pandey and Dr. Ruchita Pangriya**

### Abstract

Social media is now an essential component of every organisation due to its pervasiveness. Every organisation, large or small, employs a social media strategy in some form or another. However, the ability of advertisers to continually come up with fresh ideas has been constrained by a lack of knowledge regarding the usefulness of social media platforms as well as the qualities that draw customers. The perception evaluation of consumers regarding various platforms is still in nascent stage. The chosen social media platforms are Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Company Portal and Consumer Opinion Forums based on their ranking on Alexa. The study was conducted on 250 dynamic online media users of Delhi, India. The spatial map was obtained, shows the perspective of various social media platforms based on two dimensions i.e., enjoyment and usefulness. Further attribute-based perceptual mapping was performed using discriminant analysis and chosen social media platforms were categorised using eight predefined attributes. The results of this study will help to the social media managers advertisers, and brand managers to design the best strategy to advertise their products on various social media platforms. Also, it will be useful to measure users' perception about social media platforms based on attributes. The study can be useful to the marketers, advertisers, and brand managers in designing advertisements on social media sites by embedding certain essential features.

**Keywords:** Attribute based perceptual mapping, discriminant analysis, perceptual mapping, social media

### Introduction

Marketing practises were mostly conventional, but now it has taken shift towards digital marketing. Social media has grown in popularity over the last two decades and has changed the way marketers think about advertisements. Social media is a category of internet-based applications that enable the creation and exchange of user-generated content. It is based on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 3.0 (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2012) [20]. Web 3.0 technologies have allowed two-way communication between businesses and their customers. Some of the most widely used features of social media include social networking, business networking, microblogging, video and music sharing, scheduling, and meeting resources.

As consumers switch devices to get social media updates, digital consumption has increased multiple times. Furthermore, the affordable and ubiquitous data plans have made it easier for individuals to gain access to digital information. In 2018, the number of social media users reached 326.1 million and it is expected that there will be around 448 million social network users in India by 2023 (Statista, 2020) [36]. The massive increase in the distribution of large amounts of data has caused a tidal wave in the marketing industry. The global reach for top two sites, Google sites and the most popular social networking site, Facebook is 96.7% and 91.1% respectively (Comscore, 2022) [9]. Other social media sites that Indian users visit include LinkedIn, YouTube, and Twitter, in addition to Facebook. Marketers are increasingly viewing social media users as potential customers as a result of social media's massive reach in India. Marketers utilize different social media platforms to create brand acknowledgment and promotion, bridging the gap between companies and consumers. It helps the organisation by growing brand awareness, making leads, and expanding incomes, in addition to other things. The news disseminates faster on social media platforms rather than the news channels.

**Corresponding Author:**

**Dr. Ruchita Pangriya**

Assistant Professor, Department  
of Business, Laxman Singh  
Mahar Campus, Singh Jeena  
University, Uttarakhand, India

Digital presence of brands has major impact on consumer engagement. On an average an individual spends almost 2 hours per day on social media and 54% of users looking for information about products to get assistance in decision making process (Globalwebindex, 2020) [16]. People are now more on to a digital platform for getting any pertinent information. As a result, it is critical for businesses to recognise the role and characteristics of various social media channels and to concentrate on various channels in order to capture customers' attention and engage them with their brands.

Marketers are switching from uni-directional way of information dissemination to multi-directional live interactions with their consumers. The interactions on social media are shaping the disseminated content which is one of the important factors for consumer engagement (Landry, Ude, & Vollmer, 2007) [24]. If organisations are skipping this profitable source of electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), they are missing a significant chance of consumer engagement. Many businesses are attempting to leverage as many forms of social media as possible in the hope that using multiple social media platforms will yield better results. Unfortunately, the majority of marketers have no idea which social media platform is best for their needs (Lee & Suh, 2014) [26]. If marketers will be able to understand how consumers perceive various social media channels, they could make better social media strategy for various platform for their products. This research article aims to gain a better understanding of the characteristics of each social media by comparing how users view each social media.

## Literature Review

### Engagement

Consumer engagement serves as a vehicle for increasing brand awareness, building brand equity, and cultivating customer resonance (Dessart, Veloutsou & Morgan, 2015) [13]. In conventional advertising, buyers were not involved in the process value creation however in modern marketing, buyers are effectively associated with the worth creation process.

Internet acted as a medium to communicate with huge number of people altogether with just few clicks. Organisations require an integrated approach for elements of marketing communication to understand consumers and their behaviour and needs (Ivanov, 2012) [18]. Yadav *et al.* (2016) [40] mentioned that social media provide an opportunity for consumers' co-creation consumer engagement and fortified firm's profit sales and competition advantage. Customers who actively participate, provide feedback, and share information are more likely to co-create value for the company (Algesheimer, Dholakia, & Hermann, 2005; Martínez-Cañas, Ruiz-Palomino, Linuesa-Langreo & Blázquez-Resino 2016) [2, 28].

Vohra and Bhardwaj (2016) [38] explored social media worked as a platform for consumer needs, interactions and value addition which formed the backbone of consumer engagement. Consumers could be engaged through various options e.g., likes, comments, shares, subscribers etc. Role of social media advertisement on customers engagement was discussed in earlier literature (Voorveld, Noort, Muntinga & Bronner, 2018) [17]. Consumer engagement was dependent on context of advertisement messages on various social media platforms. The different features and functionalities of various social media platforms led to different set of impressions. Every social media platform was found to be unique and had different purpose for engagement. Apart from this user's

attitude was one another significant factor. Two variables that shape users' attitude were perceived ease of use and usefulness. Perceived usefulness is defined as the extent to which a person believes that using technology will be useful and enhance his or her job performance (Davis *et al.* 1989; Pavlou 2003) [11, 31] whereas perceived ease of use is the extent to which someone thinks adopting a certain system would be effortless (Davis, 1989) [11]. Logan (2014) [27] revealed that young adults' intentions to follow brands on social media platforms were directly affected by the perceived ease of use.

Any advertisement, traditional or modern, must include interactivity in their messages. The interactivity dimensions found in both types of advertisements, including active engagement and reaction, consumer control, involvement, physical action, two-way communication, and feedback (Viator, Hoover, Sullivan, O'Donoghue, Southwell, & Kahwati, 2022) [15]. The level of interactivity of social media platforms is determined not only by their technological features, but also by their users. Customers create, share, and comment on social media. There are several factors that influence the number of likes and comments, including vividness, interactivity, brand content (information and entertainment), post position, and brand post valance. The number of likes on brand pages increased as a result of the vividness and interactivity of brand posts. The number of likes was directly proportional to the number of positive comments shared. To increase the number of comments, both positive and negative comments can be shared (Karimova, 2011) [22].

Role of online communities and peoples interact with brands and other people is being discussed in previous literature (Dessart *et al.*, 2015) [13]. Chu and Kim (2011) [7-8] examined the association between in group participation in most popular social networking site, Facebook and responses generated to viral advertising. The efficacy of viral advertising campaigns was dependent on consumers' engagement in Facebook groups. Members of the group are more optimistic about social media and advertising. The users who have a positive attitude towards the advertisements are much likely to associate themselves with brand's group to get notification regarding promotional messages (Dessart *et al.*, 2015) [13]. It was likewise recommended that there is a connection exists between customers' utilization of and commitment in bunch applications on an online media site.

Apart from this age was a significant factor shaping the attitude of users towards social media. College-aged social media users have the most favourable views of social media advertisements and possibly the best medium to advertise. For targeting young audience marketers need to create brand pages on different social media platforms.

Companies can use these pages to share brand-related information, videos, current promotions, quizzes, and so on. These brand pages have the capability of engaging users by liking, commenting on, or sharing a post.

### Social media attributes

Academics and businesses have begun to investigate the attributes of social media in order to bring their valuable benefits to reality. Understanding the attributes and characteristics of social media may aid in better understanding the nature of social media and its impact (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) [21]. Many previous studies addressed and proposed a variety of social media attributes, including but not limited to: ease of use, interaction and broad participation, perceived

usefulness, fun and entertainment, trust, duration of usage, ease of communicating information to the public, information satisfaction, and high credibility (Khatib, 2016). Few other studies categorised attribute into four: information feature, motivation, promotion tool, usability (Lee and Suh, 2014) [26]. Lee and Suh (2014) [26] categorised attribute into four: information feature, motivation, promotion tool, usability. Java, Song, Finin, and Tseng (2007) [19] revealed the main intentions of Twitter users were daily chats, conversations, information dissemination and news reporting. There were different motivations, advantages and multiple intentions of users which encouraged them to post tweets on site. The Twitter users were categorised as source of information, information seekers and friends. The quality of information on a company's website essentially effects perceptions of consumers about company's website (DeLone and McLean, 2003). Consumer attitudes are shaped by the credibility of the source, reputation, familiarity with the content, and information quality (Bhagat and Parrish 2018). Most of the previous researchers have done a comparative analysis of mostly three to four platforms (Archambault & Grudin, 2012; Natarajan, Balakrishna, Balasubramanian & Manickavasagam, 2014; Alhabash & Ma, 2017; Mathew, Dutt, Maity, Goyal & Mukherjee, 2018) [4, 30, 3, 29]. Archambault & Grudin performed longitudinal research on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Alhabash & Ma (2017) [3] did study on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat. Li & Hou, 2017 did an investigation of user generated content on Twitter. Natarajan *et al.*, (2014) [30] Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube and Twitter. The research in this field was based on simple comparative analysis. Very few researchers focussed on attribute assessment and perceptual maps (Lee & Suh, 2014; Voorveld *et al.*, 2018) [26, 17]. The field lacks the understanding of attributes related to various social media platforms. The present study is an attempt to combine six different types of social media platforms and their attribute assessment. The future heroes are those who are able to identify empowered, educated and well networked consumers for value creation and extraction process to achieve sustainable competitive advantage (Pralhad and Ramaswamy, 2004) [37]. The objective of this study was to understand what attributes consumers associate with various social media platforms. This study focussed on six platforms of different types and a comparative analysis was done at two levels. Firstly, they were bifurcated based on two dimensions using multi-dimensional scaling. Multidimensional scaling is a technique for showing distances between objects when the distance between pairs of objects. The objects here are the social media platforms. Multidimensional scaling technique, similarity and dissimilarity judgments were assessed using a five-point scale, with 1 indicating strong disagreement and 5 indicating strong agreement. A distance matrix is the input to multidimensional scaling and the output is a spatial map. The distance matrix is formed by these similarity and dissimilarity judgements. Secondly, these platforms were differentiated using eight different attributes. The attributes were, interactivity (Karimova, 2011; Chu & Kim, 2011; Voorveld *et al.*, 2018) [22, 7-8, 17], information quality (Voorveld *et al.*, 2018) [17], ease of use usefulness (Lee & Suh, 2014) [26] entertaining (Alhabash & Ma, 2017; Voorveld *et al.*, 2018) [3, 17] content's choice (Voorveld *et al.*, 2018) [17], live interactions (Lee & Suh, 2014; Alhabash & Ma, 2017) [26, 3], and privacy (Chu, 2011) [7-8]. This was done using attribute based perceptual mapping.

### Research Methodology

Based on traffic and rankings on Alexa.com, this study looked at the six most prominent Social Media Platforms, Facebook,

Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Consumer Opinion Forums, and business portals. Multi-dimensional scaling is used for similarity or dissimilarity judgements and attribute based perceptual mapping using Discriminant Analysis to evaluate the responses and draw maps showing brand positioning in consumers' mind.

A questionnaire was developed and a total of 250 samples were obtained. SPSS version 25 was used performing MDS and attribute based perceptual mapping. In Multidimensional scaling technique, similarity and dissimilarity judgments were assessed using a five-point scale, with 1 indicating strong disagreement and 5 indicating strong agreement. Consumer expectations of different channels were assessed in the second phase based on eight attributes using attribute-based perception mapping using discriminant analysis. The attributes were, interactivity, information quality, ease of use, usefulness, entertaining, content's choice, live interactions, and privacy. To see if the respondents were eligible for the questionnaire, users were asked the following screening question, "Please choose the social media platforms that you've visited." Only users who said "yes" to all six social media platforms were interviewed. Then they were asked about five demographic questions: gender, age, usage hours, occupation, and income level.

### Results and Discussion

The analysis is divided in two sections, first part shed light on developing the spatial map and the second part showed the attribute assessment of social media platforms. In the first section steps for developing spatial map were discussed. These steps are preparing distance matrix, deciding the number dimensions and plotting of selected social media platforms with two dimensions on a spatial map.

#### Similarity or Dissimilarity judgements

The first part examines how people feel about various social media platforms in general. The responses of the users were tallied, combined and transformed into a distance matrix. MDS was used to see if a pairwise distance matrix between six social media platforms could be used to create a two-dimensional map. The matrix is 6 by 6, with the same number of rows and columns representing each brand. The distance or disparity between each pair of social media platforms is represented by a cell. Zero is the own distance. For instance, Facebook is identical to itself or has no differences at all. The results of distance matrix are presented in table 1.

**Table 1:** Distance matrix of Social Media Platforms

	Fb	Tw	LI	YT	Cp	Cof
Fb	0	5.22	5.27	5.52	5.67	5.28
Tw	5.22	0	5.45	5.62	5.21	5.3
LI	5.27	5.45	0	6.13	4.98	5.15
Yt	5.52	5.62	6.13	0	5.32	5.43
Cp	5.67	5.21	4.98	5.32	0	4.08
Cof	5.28	5.3	5.15	5.43	4.08	0

**Source:** Primary data analysis

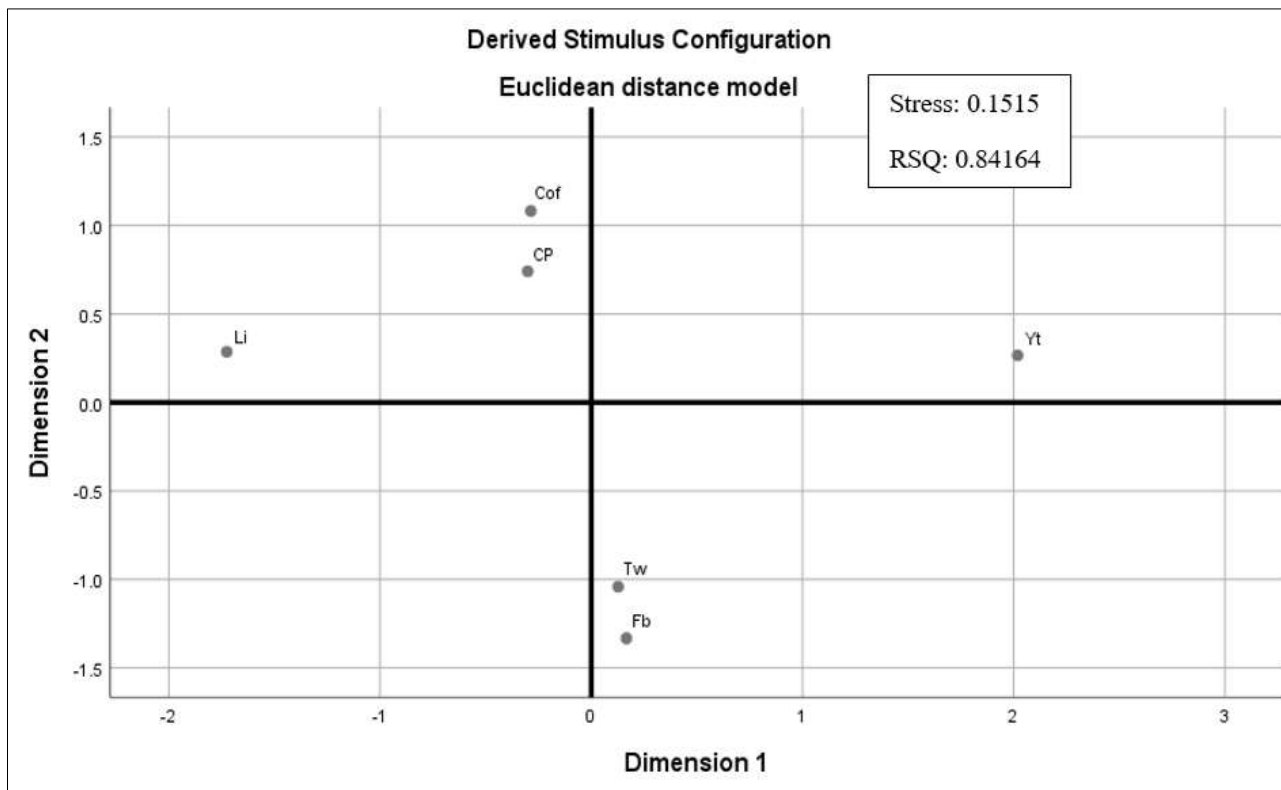
#### Spatial map for social media platforms

The first step for spatial map is to decide the number of dimensions which can be accomplished utilizing the three parameters proposed by Das and Malhotra (2017) [10] stress vs dimensionality diagram, ease of use, and spatial chart interpretability. We may make an elbow plot to identify the number of dimensions using the stress generated for various numbers of dimensions. In MDS, this plot is known as a scree

plot. The elbow point in the scree plot below implies that two measurements are necessary. The reliability and validity of the MDS technique was established by the stress and R-square indices. The badness of fit is represented by the stress value. The lower the value, the better the fit. The stress value of 0.15153 demonstrates that the MDS technique is a decent match.

Figure 1 depicts the spatial representation of different social media sites. Dimension 1 is defined as enjoyment, and

dimension 2 is defined as usefulness, according to a thorough review of the literature (Sharma, 2015) [34]. It is reflected, YouTube takes the top spot among all because it has high values in both dimensions. Facebook and Twitter, which are high on the enjoyment scale but low on the usefulness scale, make up the second cluster. Furthermore, the last category includes LinkedIn, Company portals, and Consumer Opinion forums, which have a low level of enjoyment but a high level of usefulness.



Source: Primary data analysis

Fig 1: Spatial map for social media platforms

**Attribute based perceptual mapping of SMPs using Discriminant analysis**

The next move was to evaluate the attributes. Discriminant analysis was used to analyse the responses obtained for attribute-based perceptual mapping. For the study, SPSS version 25 was used. Interactivity, information quality, ease of use, usefulness, entertainment, content availability, live interactions, and privacy were used to assess consumer preferences for various channels. The eight describing attributes were used as independent variables, while the social media platforms (SMP) type was used as a categorical dependent variable. The results of the analysis of equality of means are summarised in Table 3. All eight attributes were found significant at  $p < 0.001$ , implied they discriminate between all six SMPs. Since we used six SMPs for perception

assessment, we can only have a maximum of five discriminating functions (Das & Malhotra, 2017) [10]. The Lambda statistics of Wilks are used to classify essential discriminant functions that explain class differences. SMPs have four main roles that set them apart. The ratio of the number of squares between groups to the sum of squares within groups is the eigen value. The Wilks' Lambda insights are utilized to analyse the significant discriminant functions which explains differences among different groups. There are four significant functions which differentiates the SMPs. The eigenvalues and level of difference depicted by each function are displayed in Table 2. The first function is responsible for 59 percent of the aggregate, while the subsequent function is liable for 32.6 percent. The initial four function add to 99 percent altogether.

**Table 2:** Results of Discriminant Analysis

Wilks' Lambda				
Variable	Wilks' Lambda	F	Significance	
Interactivity	0.982	5.471	.000	
Information quality	0.969	9.479	.000	
Ease_of_use	0.948	16.339	.000	
Usefulness	0.953	14.765	.000	
Entertaining	0.908	30.317	.000	
Content's choice	0.947	16.597	.000	
Live interactions	0.971	8.869	.000	
Privacy	0.974	7.909	.000	
Canonical Discriminant functions				
Function	Eigenvalue	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Canonical Correlation
1	0.161 <sup>a</sup>	59.0	59	0.372
2	0.089 <sup>a</sup>	32.6	91.6	0.285
3	0.010 <sup>a</sup>	3.8	95.4	0.101
4	0.010 <sup>a</sup>	3.6	99	0.098
5	0.003 <sup>a</sup>	1.0	100	0.052
Canonical Discriminant Function Coefficients				
Test of Functions	Wilks' Lambda	Chi-Square	df	Significance
1 through 5	0.774	382.746	40	0.000
2 through 5	0.898	160.650	28	0.000
3 through 5	0.978	33.898	18	0.013
4 through 5	0.988	18.555	10	0.046
5	0.997	4.044	4	0.400

Source: Primary data analysis, SPSS 25

For plotting attributes, standardised canonical discriminant coefficients were used, while for plotting SMPs, unstandardized canonical discriminant functions at group centroids were used (Table 3).

**Table 3:** Standardised and Unstandardized Canonical Discriminant Function coefficients

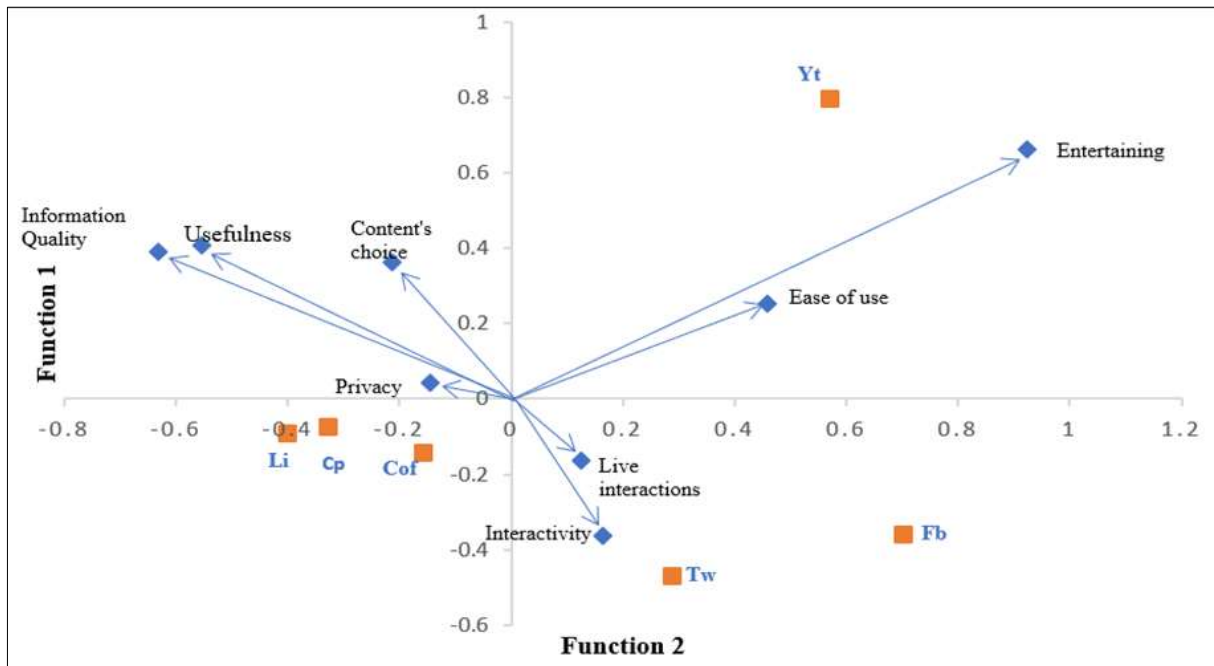
Standardized Canonical- Discriminant Function Coefficients					
Attribute	Function 1	Function 2	Function 3	Function 4	Function 5
Interactivity	0.163	-0.763	0.575	-0.717	-0.526
Information quality	-0.631	0.391	0.417	-0.555	0.763
Ease_of_use	0.458	0.252	0.578	0.486	0.867
Usefulness	-0.555	0.408	0.756	0.703	-0.092
Entertaining	0.924	0.663	0.092	-0.955	-0.43
Content's choice	-0.213	0.363	-0.219	1.027	-0.739
Live interactions	0.124	-0.164	-1.103	0.358	0.833
Privacy	-0.144	0.041	-0.29	0.164	-0.237
Unstandardized Canonical- Discriminant Function Coefficients					
Attribute	Function 1	Function 2	Function 3	Function 4	Function 5
Facebook	0.703	-0.359	0.128	-0.112	0.031
Twitter	0.287	-0.469	-0.21	0.056	-0.009
LinkedIn	-0.401	-0.09	-0.091	0.127	0.062
YouTube	0.571	0.796	-0.112	-0.021	-0.013
Company portal	-0.328	-0.073	-0.012	-0.195	0.030
Consumer Opinion forum	-0.158	-0.144	-0.09	0.022	-0.101

Source: Primary data analysis, SPSS 25

The next step is to create a perceptual map using discriminating functions. The results show four discriminating functions, three perceptual maps were plotted between Function 1 and Function 2, Function 1 and Function 3, and Function 1 and Function 4. Interactivity, information quality, ease of use, usefulness, entertaining, content's choice, live interactions and privacy are all represented by the perceptual maps in figures 2, figure 3 and figure 4. These graphs depict the architecture of six different social media platforms based on attribute assessment. Longer arrows towards group centroids indicate that the variable has a strong relationship with that group. As inferred from table 4 six attributes were prominent and other two i.e., ease of use and utility were not differentiating among SMPs. These six attributes will contribute to four prominent dimensions. Dimension 1 is revealed to be entertaining and information quality, as evidenced by the standardised discriminant coefficient values

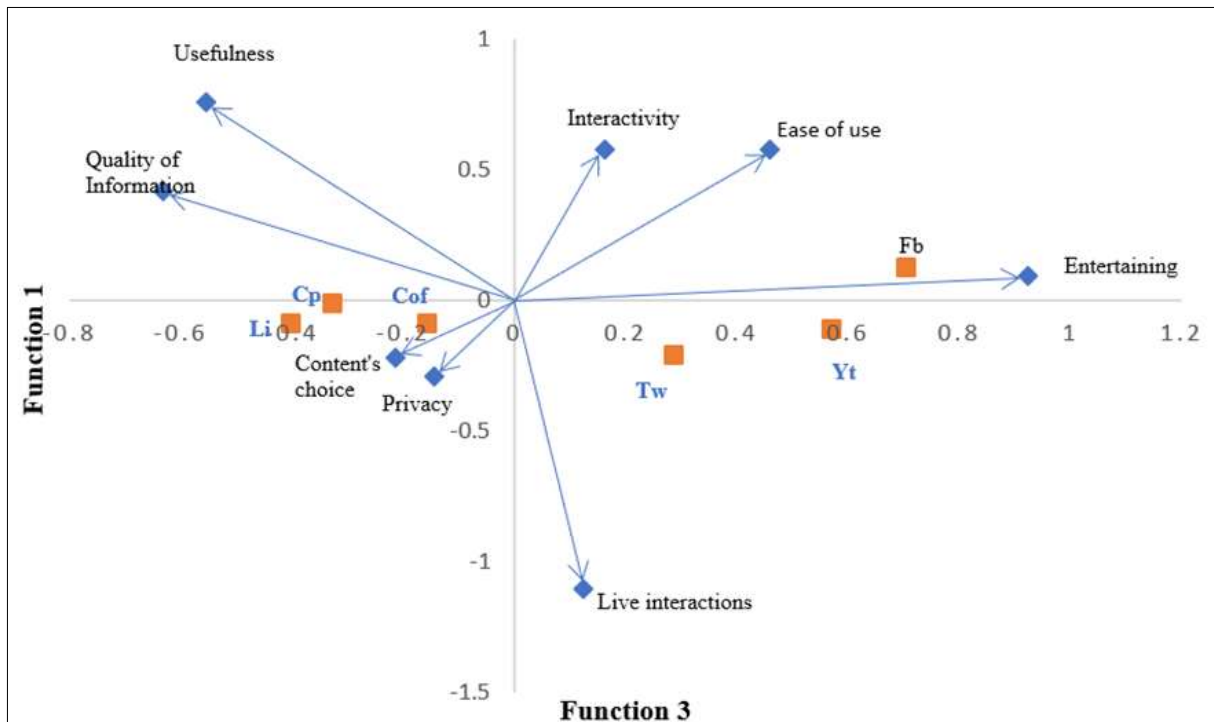
of entertaining (0.924) and information quality (-0.637). Interactivity appears to be the second dimension (-0.763). Dimension 3 contains the attribute of real time (1.103), whereas Dimension 4 is for choice of content (1.027) attribute. Though the value for privacy attribute is less but it is closer to one dimension. Since the arrows are not closer to either of the two dimensions, the attributes of ease of use and utility are not as prevalent.

The perceptual maps clearly show two distinct clusters of SMPs with distinct positions. LinkedIn, Company Portal and Consumer Opinion Platform, scored well on usefulness, information quality, content choice, and privacy but poorly on the remaining attributes. The second cluster, on the other hand, includes Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, which excel at entertaining, interactivity, live interactions, and ease of use. Among second cluster, YouTube occupies most distinguishing position as it is high on entertainment and ease of use attributes.



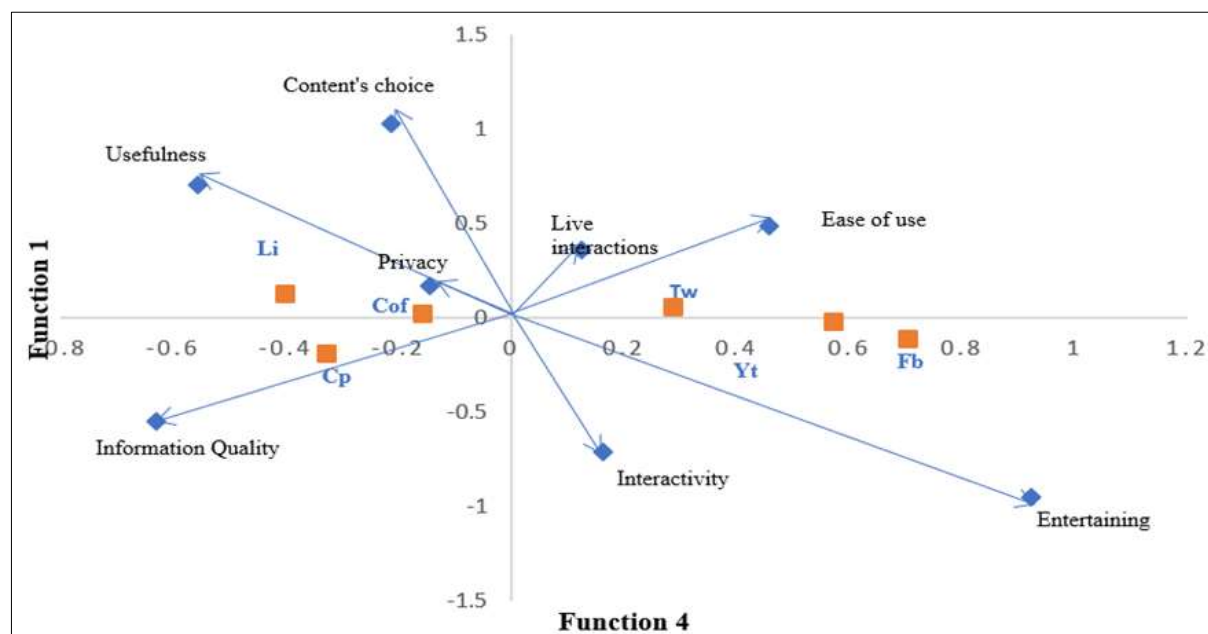
Source: Primary data analysis

Fig 2: Attribute based perceptual mapping of SMP attributes: Function 1 vs. Function2



Source: Primary data analysis

Fig 3: Attribute based perceptual mapping of SMP attributes: Function1 vs. Function3



Source: Primary data analysis

Fig 4: Attribute based perceptual mapping of SMP attributes: Function1 vs. Function4

## Discussion

This study was aimed to empirically investigate the consumer perceptions regarding various social media platforms. This study examined the top six social media websites separately based on Alexa rankings. The analysis was done using eight attributes: interactivity, information quality, ease of use, usefulness, entertainment, content availability, live interactions, and privacy. Multi-dimensional scaling and attribute based perceptual mapping using discriminant analysis was used to create perceptual maps. The study yielded new insights that are useful to both academicians and practitioners. Specifically, the comparison of user perception of belief across the six social media platforms websites offers valuable useful information.

This article demonstrates how various social media platforms performed on various attributes. Two clusters were created from the six platforms. LinkedIn, Company Portal, & Consumer Opinion Forum made up the initial cluster. LinkedIn received low score on interaction dimension and excellent score for usefulness, content's choice, and information quality (Voorveld *et al.*, 2018) [17]. The brand's content serves as the glue that binds customers to it throughout the day. One of the key components of compelling content is informativeness (Ashley and Tuten, 2015) [5]. Most professionals utilise LinkedIn to expand their professional networks. Useful and content specific information can be found on company portal and consumer opinion forums (Lee & Suh, 2014) [26]. Marketing communications should be conducted in appropriate consumer opinion forums, and opinion leaders may be persuaded to promote products or services (Ahonen & Moore, 2005) [1]. Online forum affects are significant during the information search and evaluation stages, according to literature (Rowley, 2000; Shim *et al.*, 2001; Wright and Jayawardhena, 2001; De Valck, 2005; Vazquez and Xu, 2009) [33, 35, 37].

Regarding the second cluster, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube stand out for their superiority in areas like entertainment, engagement, live interactions, and ease of use. For new users, these three platforms are the most user-friendly (Lee & Suh, 2014) [26]. Social interaction and entertainment were the driving forces behind utilising

Facebook and Twitter (Voorveld *et al.*, 2018; Alhabash & Ma, 2017; Chu, 2011; Lee & Kim, 2014) [17, 3, 7-8, 26]. Facebook usage intensity is significantly predicted by entertainment (Alhabash & Ma, 2017) [3]. Facebook is used for maintaining relationships, forming new ones, and creating online communities (Alhabash & Mc Alister, 2014) [3]. Facebook has privacy concerns (Chu, 2011) [7-8]. The information shared on Facebook and Twitter is real time (Chu, 2011; Voorveld *et al.*, 2018; Lee & Suh, 2014) [7-8, 17, 26]. The users on Twitter interact in real time using 140 characters tweets to their followers (Alhabash & Ma, 2017) [3]. YouTube scored highest on the entertainment dimension (Voorveld *et al.*, 2018) [17].

This study offers a fundamental knowledge of how users' perceptions and attitudes toward advertisements vary across six different social media platforms. Theoretically, however, the most intriguing result of the current study is that in order to create a successful social media strategy, it is vital to consider both the social media platforms and their qualities.

## Conclusion

Social media has emerged as a new frontier in the marketing field. The perception regarding SMPs were evaluated using spatial map and followed by their attribute assessment. The results of spatial map revealed that consumers categorised these platforms on the basis of usefulness and enjoyment and formed various clusters. These results were further supported by attribute assessment using discriminant analysis. The identified dimensions of SMPs were, entertaining and information quality, interactivity, privacy, live interactions and content's choice. The attributes usefulness and easy to use were not significant. Based on attributes, these platforms were divided in two clusters. First cluster comprised of LinkedIn, Company Portal and Consumer Opinion Forum whereas the second cluster consisted Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. The different positions of social media platforms clearly indicate the uniqueness of each platform. The findings suggest that the organisation should focus on these distinguishable features before designing their brand strategy in order to reap maximum benefits.

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