

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING: A GAME CHANGER STRATEGY

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ABSTRACT

The Companies now days are facing major transformation in the administration and strategies of doing business due to the penetration of internet in almost every aspect of industry. The reach of products or services of any business are vast spread with the internet technology. Many platforms are now available for greater reach to customers worldwide. The social media is one of such platform. The organizations' marketing strategy revolves around the needs, wants, desires and preferences of customers. The application of social media improves the chances of successful reach towards consumers in a cost effective manner. With the rise of social media marketing as an important domain of practice and research, a growing number of scholarly and practitioner articles have emerged highlighting best practices in social media marketing. This paper is an attempt to draw attention to the issues related to social media marketing in various aspects.

KEYWORDS: *Social Media, Marketing, Digital, Customers, Companies.*

Introduction

Customer is at the heart of everything that companies do. All of the efforts related to advertising and promotion are centralized to the customers' desires and preferences. Social media have provided new opportunities to consumers to engage in social interaction on the internet. Consumers use social media, such as online communities, to generate content and to network with other users. The study of social media can also identify the advantages to be gained by business. Recent advances on the internet and the development of social media have facilitated the interconnectivity of consumers. Consumers have social interactions through social media such as online forums, communities, ratings, reviews and recommendations. These developments have introduced a new stream in e-commerce, called social commerce, which empowers consumers to generate content and influence others. These interactions provide different values for both business and consumers. Both are involved in the co-creation of value. Over the past few years, the digital and social media landscape has shown that India Inc. is embracing social media to attract, engage and transact with their customers. The trend of online marketing is increasing all over the world as well as in India also.

Social media marketing is about a building a conversation with clients and consumers. It is something that takes place online. It is type of communication; it is unlike any other technology in history it has created a modern day renaissance for several reasons which are broken here. Social media a shift in how people discover, read and share news, information and content. Unfortunately many small business struggles to use social media and have no strategy going into it. Social Media Marketing makes use of social media sites to raise visibility on the Internet and to promote products and services. Social media sites are useful for building social (and business) networks, and for exchanging ideas and knowledge. Social Media Marketing uses podcasts, wikis, blogs, online videos, photo sharing, news sharing, message boards, and posts on social networking sites to reach a large or targeted audience.

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Social media are a means for consumers to share text, images, audio, and video information with each other and with companies and vice versa. Social media allow marketers to establish a public voice and presence on the web and reinforce other communication activities. Because of their day-to-day immediacy, they can also encourage companies to stay innovative and relevant. Therefore; business must learn how to use social media in a way that is consistent with their business plan. This is especially true for companies striving to gain a competitive advantage.

The popularity of social media for marketing purposes can be attributed to a number of advantages associated with social media when compared to traditional marketing channels. Social media can be used to solve business, marketing and communication challenges, and is an important part of digital marketing. Consumers spend more and more time online, and that time is increasingly being spent on social media sites. In 2016 over 67% of Internet users were active social media users, equating to 2.3 billion people, 10% more than in January 2015 (Chaffey, 2016). Users spend an average of 30% of their time online, on social media (Mander, 2016).

Application areas of Social Media in Business Administration

Most of the companies are using social media as a strong platform for advertising and promotion. Other than advertising field the businesses can use social media for following areas:

- Communication and outreach
- Community management
- Support and customer service
- Reputation management
- Advertising and awareness
- Sales and lead generation
- Search engine optimization (SEO)
- Insights and research.

Social Networking in India

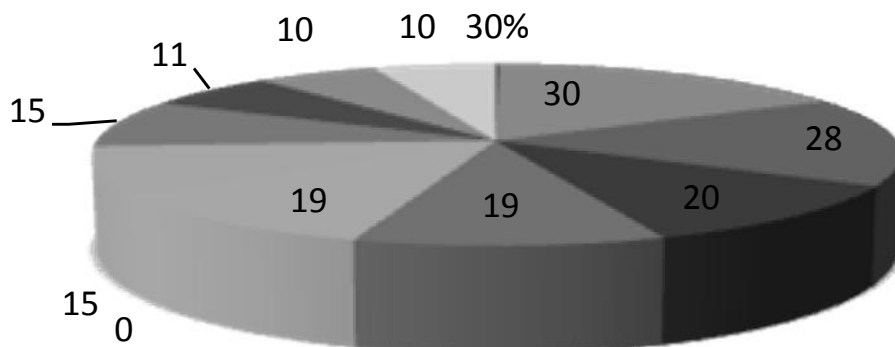
The residents of India are well versed with the usage of internet for education, shopping, travel, food, employment etc. according to statista.com the number of social network users in India have raised to 326 million in year 2018 as compared to 296 million users in 2017. It is projected that users of Face book will reach close to 319 million in India by 2021.

Year	No. of Social Network Users in India (in Millions)
2015	142
2016	168
2017	296
2018	326
2019	351 (Projected)
2020	376 (Projected)
2021	400(Projected)
2022	422(Projected)
2023	447(Projected)

Source: www.statista.com

There are more than hundred social media platforms running throughout the world. The most popular ones around the world, especially in India are Facebook, Youtube, Whatsapp, Facebook messenger, Instagram, Twitter etc. The penetration of leading social networks in India is shown as under:

Penetration % of Social Network India as of III quarter 2011



Source: www.statista.com

Companies using Social Media as Marketing Strategy

There is a buzz around the business world about the reach to customers using social networking. Almost all big business giants are enmeshing huge profits with the social media or digital media. Some of the successful examples of the social media campaigns are discussed here to highlight social media as a strong advertising platform.

One of the newly started beverage company Paper boat used social media for creating awareness and promoting its products among the social media users. The campaign was named as #FloatABOat with a purpose of reliving childhood memories. In this digital campaign the consumers were asked to float a boat and share it with social media using the title of the campaign. The company related this campaign with donation to child's education also. This became a huge success.

Sony India Pvt. Ltd. collaborated with Shiamak Davar, one of the best known choreographer and youth icon in India for organizing and leading the dance contests on the integrated platforms, including its extensions to college-level ground activities. The company in turn rewarded the winners of the different contests with Bravia TVs, sound accessories and Spiderman merchandise.

HDFC came up with #RayOfHope for the promotion of their HDFC Life Cancer Care plan. The plan was to provide the financial help for the cancer. The brand smartly signed the model turned actress and social activist, who herself has been fighting with the rare type of cancer. This video was very popular over social social media and falls under the category of successful digital campaigns.

The Gaana.com launched in 2010, for promoting its services used facebook as a advertisement platform. It also provided option of downloading the gaana app from google play store. The results of using social media were commendable and company draw attention from large number of social network users.

Mahindra's Gusto which is the two wheelers and first automatic scooter came up with the outstanding digital marketing campaign that involved the food bloggers. These bloggers travelled around their city to several food joints on their Gusto. The name of the campaign was #GOGustoRides.

Conclusion

The traditional marketing methods like television, radio, newspapers, and magazines were the preferred media in the 20th century. Now is the era of internet revolution, the companies need to focus on modern marketing methods like online media, social media, digital media etc. The organizations that are using the right balance between the traditional and modern marketing media are the winners. The use of online networking is increasing with the growth of internet and education among the population but there are certain percentages of customers that are non users of internet and prefer traditional marketing media sources. For grand success of any brand companies should shift their focus from traditional media to social media. It is the need of the hour. Social media penetration is increasing with high rates. In the coming years the social media marketing will become the strongest parameter for evaluating advertising effectiveness. Thus, the businesses should apply a proper mix of social networking sites and apps for achieving competitive advantage.

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