

Digital Marketing through Social Media', Is It A Threat for Traditional Marketers

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ABSTRACT

This study explains the role of Social Media marketing as an e-commerce tool which is expected to avail tremendous benefits to companies in the world of business. Corporates which are capable of implementing proper Social Media marketing platform to market their products can improve their profit as well as customer numbers. The changes of consumer behavior in modern era necessitate the firms to rethink their marketing strategies in the Social Media's domain. The internet based application in the second generation accelerated the marketing efforts paving ways to firms to implement innovative forms of communication and to create contents with their customers. With a survey of online buyers, Business Executives and Sales Managers (categorized as business people), this article shows that the trend has increased to buy online and offline with the influence of social media marketing and firms are pressurised to adopt the Social Media marketing platforms to survive in the market. So firms must focus on relationship based interactions with their customers to improve digital marketing engagement. This article demonstrates how some firms are accomplishing this by improving competitiveness and sales.

KEYWORDS: E-Commerce; Social-Media Marketing; Interactive Marketing; Digital marketing; Budget spending; Digital media trends.

1. INTRODUCTION

It has become the part of daily lives of billions of people to use internet(2), Social Media, mobile and computer apps as well as digital communication technologies. There are 4.39 billion internet users in 2019, an increase of 366 million (9 percent) versus January 2018. There are 3.49 billion Social Media users in 2019, with the worldwide total growing by 288 million (9 percent) since this time last year. Among the college-educated and higher income adults, the percentage of using internet is very high. Younger people- mass consumers of next generation- also spend increasing time online. Social Media triggered this growth. Social Media statistics from 2019 show that there are 3.49 billion Social Media users worldwide, and this number is rapidly growing. That equates to about 45% of the current population. China has the highest number of internet users in the world (Internet), with over 748 million users followed by India with 455 million users. Facebook recently crossed 2 billion users and India may be the biggest contributor for its next billion. For FB there are 241 million active users in the country which is a million more than of U.S. As per the report from the Next Web, the active users in India have increased 27% during the last six months compared to 12% in the United States. All these statistics are more evident that people are more exposing to digital and Social Media. For many purposes they use this, including searching for information about products, procuring and using it, as well as communicate with others about their experience. So this is a fundamental shift and

marketers cannot neglect it, instead of using more digital marketing channels because future marketing will largely be carried out in digital setting, particularly through Social Media and mobile. So for marketers it is very essential to understand the changing consumer behavior in digital environment(3). The following statistics strengthens the above mentioned facts.

**FIG NO 1**

2. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Internet and Social Media usage is more and more increasing (5). The emergence of smart phones combined with Social Media is a big and constant threat for traditional marketers (6). The trend of using Social Media more and more excessively by children, adolescents and teenagers should also be considered(7). Some companies, even though use the internet marketing, but fail and some of them are still in confusion to use social media marketing either avoiding the traditional way of marketing or along with it. Some companies don't know what the most preferred social media marketing approach is. So this study will help to predict the trends in social media marketing and provide suitable suggestions to companies.

3. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

In this study, the scope has been limited to Social Media marketing only. The study has been confined to Kerala region as the Kerala circle has the high degree of internet penetration and a lot of social network users.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To examine the extent of Social Media which will help the consumers in the buying behavior.
- To study the expectation of consumers from Social Media and the actual performance of it.
- To suggest strategies to improve the marketing activities of companies in the social media digital marketing era.

5. METHODOLOGY

This study is exploratory in nature and included qualitative as well as quantitative analysis. Data have been collected from two types of respondents for the purpose of the study. One from the online buyers and one from business people. A questionnaire has been designed to know the

point of view of respondents about how Social Media helps them to take a buying decision of online purchasers and how does Social Media help the business firms to increase their sales and number of customers. The first part of questionnaire is questions regarding the demographic information of respondents as well as their pattern of usage of Social Media. The second part of questionnaire contains some questions of close-ended in nature which are related to the impact of Social Media to take a buying decision and their expectation from such media. Questionnaire was transformed to Google form and sent the link to various respondents through whatsapp and Facebook as well as Twitter. The respondents and other people were also requested to share the link from their profile also. A total of 383 responses of social networkers were collected and analyzed. So the sampling technique used is non-probability convenience sampling. The secondary data and information have also been extensively used for preparing this paper. The secondary data have been collected from different scholars and researchers, published e-books, articles published in different journals, periodicals, company websites and CSR activity reports and companies' internal newsletters. The publically available data and information of companies in their websites have also been used. The methodology used was a critical literature review, for which the above mentioned methods is a best practice.

6. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

It is very clear from the review of literature that for all kinds of businesses Social Media has been widely used. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube are highly effective for B2B and B2C marketing. So in this part we concentrate on explaining how Social Media's presence can be increased for firms and how it is better than the traditional advertising techniques. We also focus on how Social Media usage can enhance small businesses. There should be a way to measure the impact of using Social Media for marketing rather than merely implementing it.

PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

VARIABLE	CLASSIFICATION	TOTAL NUMBER	%
GENDER	MALE	174	45.33
	FEMALE	209	54.67
AGE	LESS THAN 18	28	7.33
	18-24	144	37.33
	25-39	183	48.00
	40-60	28	7.33
TYPES	BUSINESS PEOPLE	115	30.03
	ONLINE BUYERS	268	69.97

FIG NO 2

45.33% of respondents are Males and 54.77% are females gender wise. 7.33% are below the age of 18, 37.33% are between the age of 18-24, 48% are between the age of 25-39, 7.33% between the age of 40-60 age wise. Among the total respondents, 30.03% are business people and 69.97% are online buyers.

SOCIAL MEDIA USERS

FAC EBOOK	WHATSAPP	YOUTUBE	TWITTER	INSTAGRAM	OTHERS
356	352	341	253	241	142
93%	92%	89%	66%	63%	37%

TABLE NO 1

Among the respondents, 93% use Facebook for socializing followed by Whatsapp 92%, YouTube 89%, Twitter 66% and Instagram 63%. 37% of respondents are also using other Social Media sites. So Facebook is in top of mind Social Media for users.

MOTIVATION TO FOLLOW A BRAND IN SOCIAL MEDIA

43% of respondents follow a particular brand through Social Medias due to advertising or invitation from the companies directly, followed by Invitation from friends of 39%, for Brand Loyalty 33%. For research purpose 29% follow a brand.

SPENDING TIME ON SOCIAL MEDIAS.

37% of respondents spend time on Social Medias between 1 to 2 hours and 30% spend 2to3 hours, 21% spend more than 3 hours and 12% spend less than 1 hour.

REASONS TO USE SOCIAL MEDIAS (PURPOSES)

Among the respondents 303 (79%) use the social network sites for having touch with friends. 226 (59%) use for playing games or entertainment, 199 (52%) use it for exchanging their views or valuables comments on products or services , 64 (43%) use it for other activities.

CONSIDERATION OF SOCIAL MEDIAS FOR BUYING A PRODUCT

All respondents consider Social Medias to buy a product. 46% most often consider and 36% always consider. So marketers should take enough attention to market their product through Social Medias so as to widely reach it to large number of customers.

MOST SOUGHT AFTER METHOD FOR YOUNG AND OLD ENTREPRENEURS IN MARKETING

OPTIONS	NUMBERS OF RESPONDENTS	%
Yes	345	90
No	38	10

TABLE NO 2

90% of respondents are in the positive reply while 10% only negatively replied. So it is very clear that Social Media is most sought after method for marketing, advertising, brand building and promotions.

MOST EFFECTIVE SOLUTION FOR BRAND PROMOTION

PRINT MEDIAS	SOCAL MEDIAS
119	264
31%	69%

TABLE NO 3

69% of respondents are opining that the Social Medias are the effective solution for brand promotion while 31% only supported print Medias.

HELPING OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING TO FIND OUT THE POTENTIALCUSTOMERS

YES	MAY BE	NO
71%	23%	6%

TABLE NO 4

Promotions and brand building must be done with people whom we think are potential customers for our business with the technological advancements in today's world, it is fairly easy to be connected with the outside world with the help of social networking sites. Yes, most of the people agree with it.

COST IS LESS OR NOT WHILE COMPARING WITH TRADITIONAL MARKETING

OPTIONS	NUMBER OF RESPONSES	% OF RESPONSES
YES	230	60%
NO	115	30%
DEPENDS	38	10%

TABLE NO 5

60% people think relative cost is much lesser as compared with traditional advertising while 30% think it is not. The studies say that the relative cost is lesser as compared the Social Media marketing with traditional advertising.

HELPFUL FOR B2B FIRMS IN GENERATING BUSINESS

OPTIONS	NUMBER OF RESPONSES	% OF RESPONSES
YES	241	63%
NO	65	17%
DEPENDS UP ON THE REPUTATION OF THE FIRM	77	20%

TABLE NO 6

Social Media is helpful for both B2B firms in generating new sales/clients. 63% of the respondents agree with it. While others think in B2B everything is taken place in a formal way so it's not possible to generate new sales through the Social Media.

HELPFUL FOR B2C FIRM TO GENERATE BUSINESS

OPTIONS	NUMBER OF RESPONSES	% OF RESPONSES
YES	268	70%
NO	38	10%
PARTIALLY	77	20%

TABLE NO 7

70% of the people agree with this because most of the people are familiar with social networking sites and they frequently visit these sites.

MOST EFFECTIVE NETWORKING SITE FOR ONLINE MARKETING

OPTIONS	NUMBER OF RESPONSES	% OF RESPONSES
Facebook	264	69%
Twitter	80	23%
LinkedIn	31	8%

TABLE NO 8

It shows that most of the people are familiar with Facebook in comparison with other sites like Twitter and LinkedIn. Some industries more active in Twitter than Facebook like Ola and Uber cab providers.

FOLLOWING FAVORITE BRANDS IN SOCIAL SITES

OPTIONS	NUMBER OF RESPONSES	% OF RESPONSES
YES	322	84%
NO	61	16%

TABLE NO 9

84% of respondents are following their favorite brands in social sites while only 16% are not doing so.

REASONS TO FOLLOW FAVORITE BRANDS IN SOCIAL MEDIAS

OPTIONS	NUMBER OF RESPONSES	% OF RESPONSES
YOUR LIKE	103	27%
TO KNOW OFFERS	218	57%
TO WATCH MARKET PERFORMANCE OF IT	61	16%

TABLE NO 10

To know offer and other valuable information most of the respondents follow their favorite brands in Facebook and Twitter etc. with like of favorite brands, 27% follow it in social sites while 16% follow to watch the market performance of their favorite brands.

SOCIAL MEDIAS AS A GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL PLATFORM

GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL			
NOT EVEN ONCE	TWICE	ONCE	OFTEN
234	80	46	23
61%	21%	12%	6%

TABLE NO 11

It is pretty evident from the above figure that Social Media Networks are not a very good grievance redressal platform. It means that consumers do not get what exactly they perceive about Social Media Networks. At the same time it has been found during surveys that they (consumers) are not getting the response of the questions they post on the brand page. In some of the cases very inappropriate and implicit information are being provided

7. CONCLUSIONS

Social Media have become the search engine now-a-days as people trust people rather than companies. Through social network sites they can buy the products cheaper than direct purchase from companies or through their websites. So the same interest having people can connect easily through Social Media and communicate each other. Through Social Media marketing, many business firms could create a positive effect among customers such as financial institutions, travel tourism businesses, retail businesses and entertainment business etc. Social Media marketing seems to be the next big thing to hit the world as a whole as it saves time, money and highly engaging with interesting. The big advantages of Social Media marketing is that it can precisely target the potential customers. So companies can post advertisement in home page of a person if he expresses some areas of interest in his profile and such advertisement will not be a hassle for him as he wants to see such advertisements. The owner of this advertisement has to pay only if the person clicks and watches this ad. So it is a win-win situation for both the business owner and the customer. Such that the small business entities should also utilize the endless opportunities of this Social Media marketing through Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn. The small entities can reduce their advertisement expenditures which would be more if they do marketing in traditional way. Moreover they can effectively build their brand image also. Through LinkedIn more than one product can be effectively marketed from same marketer (18). The radical change in Social Media can be seen as they change themselves to keep with marketing trend up as of today. If you come across the website of the LinkedIn, you can see the tips provided by the company about how to market your own products over the LinkedIn. There are 10 tips in the company website with simple explanations. More companies are trying to market their products through Facebook today as Facebook changed itself to cater the needs of businesses as well (16). We can see several successful tips to market through Facebook as it lets individuals and businesses display information, pictures and videos, and communicate with each other. It can create profile, add

other users as friends, exchange messages with friends and view other users' profiles, either partially or fully as per the settings done by the user in their profile regarding the privacy they wish to. Anybody aged 13 years or over can start a Facebook account and access it from the computers and from internet enabled mobile device like smart phones and tablets (16). If customers of a company have Twitter accounts, then the company can successfully market their products through Twitter. Twitter can provide a lot of benefits for businesses like communicating up to date information about your businesses to your followers. It can also generate leads to successful sales, show the brand's personality of the company, seek feedback and provide customer service etc (17). Because of its popularity and features, YouTube can be a useful marketing channel for businesses. Companies could use YouTube to launch or promote products, express their brand's 'personality', monitor feedback, and provide customer service and help customers spread the word about your business. As YouTube is the second largest search engine in the world, people are constantly searching for information through YouTube and discovering videos relating to their topics. YouTube has a range of uses and benefits for business that can complement those offered by other communication channels. It can demonstrate the products of the company, create community, demonstrate expertise, save bandwidth and solve customers' problems etc (19).

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

In the coming years the social media presence will be inevitable, not only as a marketing tool, but as an order of the day to be present in social media (8). This study recommends that all kind of businesses, small scale, large scale, Business to Business (B2B) clients, Business to Customer (B2C) clients, manufacturing industries and like that should be actively present in social media. One thing has to be understood is that like other economic things, social media sites have also a cyclic growth which starts from zero, goes to peak, reach saturation and starts decline. So this is the perfect time to invest time and resources in popular social media sites such as Facebook, twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube. The performance of social media will come down to minimum gradually only. So it is not a high risk as the investment will be relatively a small amount. Social media marketing will yield better results comparing to traditional advertisement as it caters to a more focused group of people. But it is not recommended to stop the traditional marketing and fully concentrate on social media marketing as we say that only 26.3% online users use Facebook as per the statistics of June 2019. This means that even among online communities 75% are not using the popular social media site Facebook. Out of 7.7 billion people in the planet only 4.3 billion use internet, 2.7 billion only use Facebook. Among this 2.7 billion Facebook accounts, some of them may be fake users as there is a lot of evidence for that. More over half of the total accounts are not being accessed every day. This limits the chances of generating new business leads. If this is the case of the Facebook, then the picture of other social media sites will be further. More over as per the study the social media is not a good platform for redressal of consumers. This may deviate the consumers from social media purchasing platform to other way of digital platform or buying offline. So concentrating on merely the social media marketing and ignoring the traditional marketing will be more disastrous as billions of people still rely upon traditional way of marketing. So the best solution is that to combine both traditional and social media for marketing. Then only the gap will be bridged among active users of social media and non-users of it. The result will be better if do so. Small businesses should squeeze the wonderful opportunity of technology and reap the

harvest out of it. But while adopting the social media marketing tools, companies should provide good aftersales service by replying properly the doubts and clearing the complaints posted by consumers in the official social media pages of companies. Then only they can retain their active social media consumers and attract potential consumers.

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