

# USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN MARKETING

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## ABSTRACT

Social Media as we know it is no longer just a source of entertainment. Along with providing the much needed recreational time to millions of people, it has grown on to become a significant source and one stop shop for all informational needs of all its users: corporate leaders, entrepreneurs, and consumers alike.

Social Media is emerging as a strong and integral tool in shopping thereby outgrowing its own image of catering to individual interests to the much wider scope of commercialisation.

It not only enhances buyer experience but also aids the seller i.e. the companies by providing them with a strong platform to showcase their wares and services and in the process lay a strong foundation of relationship with its target audience and maintain it.

Social media, though it's various platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. gives a voice to each entity thereby enabling them to identify themselves giving rise to brand awareness, brand consciousness and eventually brand loyalty. Social media provides that slight nudge required from procrastination to purchase thereby aiding the businesses to keep their cash registers ringing.

## Introduction

Social Media Marketing or the use of social media network and platforms in the process of marketing refers to the idea of delivering content or information related to goods and services in the market to the public or users of social media. This medium of marketing can easily be achieved by merely maintaining a social media presence i.e. creating and using a social media account on a choice of platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and the like.

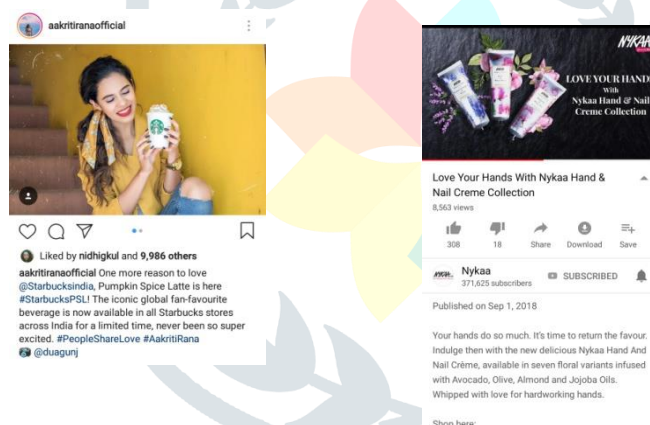
Social media, which can be accessed on various mediums like mobile phones, tablets, laptops or personal computers have the quality of reaching a wide audience and with advanced technology, it can be further filtered, so the valued seller's information will reach the target audience in real time. The ease, speed, quick response, prospects and the opportunity of market leadership along with its unique two way communication system makes social media an indispensable tool of marketing.

## The 'How' aspect of using Social Media for marketing

- Content is King with respect to all the games in the field. Same goes for marketing. **Content planning** refers to creation of relevant, concise and interest enthrusting information about the product you want to sell. In short, features like 'keyword searches' should be able to lead social media users to the seller's site. This can be achieved by producing regular, content driven images, how to guides, videos, info graphics, etc. An ideal mix of social posts along with information related to discounts and offers can usually seal the deal.

- Higher presence on social media platforms can mean more followers. More followers mean increase in number of potential customers. Following people from the same industry or related field on their blog page or twitter can lead them to follow you back and eventually get you more followers and the likes, mentions, comments, mentions and the increased activity on your page will help get a defined presence on social media. However, merely creating an account on social media cannot guarantee followers. **Brand image consistency** can be achieved through Regular updates, interaction with and response to potential buyers.
- The new buzzword in the market is **Promotion**. Sellers in the market are increasingly seeking out social media influencers for product promotion i.e. bloggers and youtubers having high social networking potential (SNP) which in simple words means having a high number of followers, usually in millions, on their social media page which then translates to a certain number views, likes, comments. Essentially, it creates a buzz about the new product through the tactics like ‘paid promotion’, ‘paid advertising’ and sponsoring the blogger’s content of customised or ‘how to’ videos and blogs, reactions and reviews.

*Instagram pages and Youtube channels by social media influencers used to promote products through paid or self sponsored promotion*



- Another way to generate or draw attention of potential buyers is by **sharing curated links** to official sites of company, product page on e-commerce website etc. Also sharing links to related information, review posts shared by followers, retweeting followers posts etc. will increase inbound traffic. Using popular hashtags increases the probability of seller’s post turn up on top of the search lists.
- Social Media presence also has the added advantage of **tracking competitors’** pages and posts, gauge their strategies and analyse what is working for them and incorporate similar strategies and methods in the seller’s own social media campaign.
- **Progress measurement** can be done through various online analytics. One of the most popular ways to gauge online inbound traffic to company’s social media page is Google Analytics. It helps to analyse the needs of target audiences and their experience on the sites thereby enabling the marketing company to identify new ways to enhance buyer experiences.

- The newest way of creating relevant content on social media is ‘**user generated content**’ also called ‘**earned media**’. It refers to usage of tags, comments, social shares etc. of followers. Onus is laid upon the existing followers to bring in potential followers through spread of word of mouth advertising.
- **Viral Marketing** in the form of video clips, text messages, images, web pages etc. are created by a sponsor company so as to appeal to individuals with high SNP who can enable its distribution to a number of devices within a short duration of time.

## **MARKETING THROUGH VARIOUS SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS**

There are a plethora of social media platforms or sites for the selling companies to choose from based on their target audience, strategy and the kind of exposure they are looking for matched with the environment of the platform. Some of them are listed below:



### **Facebook:**

Facebook gives out a very casual and friendly vibe. It is an ideal platform for local sellers, entrepreneurs working out of their homes and big corporate houses alike.

It can provide a base for a successful social media marketing strategy since it is a visual medium through which ‘how to’ videos, pictures, ad campaigns, etc. can be shared by utilising one of the cost effective Facebook Ad strategies. The first step in this medium is to create a Public Facebook Business Fan page



### **Instagram**

Instagram is primarily a picture sharing social media platform which in the recent times has taken to features of short clips video sharing and live streaming.

It basically caters to the younger generation of millennials, therefore, companies whose target audience are teenagers and young adults can run a successful ad campaigns on this site through the usage of hashtags, tags, comment contests, etc.



### **Twitter**

Twitter is an opinion sharing website operating on the basis of posts called ‘tweets’. Since there is a limit on the number of words used in a tweet, it is suitable for making official announcements related to a new launch, offers, discounts and sales. An ideal mix of brand building

tweets along with tweets related to offers, interactive activities, response to customer queries etc. can help create an effective page.



### LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a common social media site used by recruiters as well as job aspirants and employees to maintain a record of their profiles. This is an excellent platform for B2B ventures or seeking ideal business partners or prospects. The newly introduced feature wherein clients and previous employers can leave reviews on a person's profile can lead to prospective business opportunities.



### Youtube

Companies or individuals can create their own channel and monetise it, thereby creating original content which also generates income. Social media influencers can feature sponsored content and customise the video to feature the sponsored product. Company channels can hire the influencers to curate videos on the company's channel regarding reviews, 'how to' videos and info graphics, thereby obtaining an ideal mix of content and entertainment.

### Benefits of using Social Media

The advantages of using social media are immense. The main reasons for using social media as a marketing tool are to gain exposure and to generate inbound traffic which results in prospects and leads, thereby increasing the number of potential clients and maintaining relationships with the existing ones. Some of the advantages are listed below:

- **Increased Brand Awareness:** Over 91% of seller companies have attributed an increase in new customers to the usage of social media platforms. Increased level of presence on a number of social media platforms helps to create a desired image of the selling / marketing company. Furthermore, different platforms cater to different range of audiences. Therefore, maintaining an active presence on a number of sites helps to create a trustworthy image and awareness of the representative brand which will eventually lead to brand loyalty.
- **Increased inbound traffic:** Using 'keyword search' feature and Search Engine Optimization (SEO) features a lead to inflow of traffic to the company's official site leading to future prospects of revenue in the form of potential buyers or customers. Using the said features will enable more than the usual site visits and mentions. The usage of popular hashtags, mention of trending topics or word searches too can increase inbound traffic. Over 88% increase in traffic is attributed to the use of SEO.

- **Conversion Rates:** It is not necessary that the rate of inbound traffic will be proportional to the revenue of the said company. A successful social media strategy is one where the likes, shares and comments i.e. the interest generated on the social media page is reflected in the increase in the number of customers and revenue to the company.
- **Customer Satisfaction:** Fulfilling customer needs is the primary function of marketing. Social media platforms enable the companies to give real time responses to customer queries relating to the products, services and other information which they may need. These interactive platforms help remove misconceptions and affirm the trustworthy image of the firm, thereby maintaining favourable customer relationship management.
- **Leadership through thought:** Well written, structured and socially responsible and most importantly, original content helps to create market leadership for the brand the company is representing. This ability helps in using the super power of social media i.e. to use and bring about favourable social change.
- **Marketplace insight:** the use of social media by the company has dual benefits i.e. to maintain customer relationship and to gain valuable market information. Tracking competitors' progress, marketing techniques and strategies, analysing what is working for them and learning through their mistakes, etc. As well as gauging customer wants through analysing current trends and technologies helps gain an upper hand in the race.
- **Cost effectiveness:** Maintaining a social media account costs almost nothing compared to the benefits derived from it. Creating a social media account and maintaining it by way of regular updates and posts helps to maintain a favourable customer relationship and brand awareness. Therefore, it is very cheap when compared to other marketing techniques.

### **Famous Social Media Campaigns**

- **2008 US Presidential Campaign**

Barack Obama was a relatively unknown Democratic candidate when entered the political scene. His team created 15 different social media websites to strike a chord with millions of Americans who were present on the networks. With constant social media presence and updates, by the end of his campaigns, Obama had a total of 5 million social media supporters (2.5 million on Facebook and 1,15,000 on Twitter).

This coupled with e-mail campaigns launched by his team played a significant part in his victory.

- **Nike #MakeItCount**

This campaign was kicked off by YouTubers Casey Neistat and Max Joseph launching a YouTube video, where they travelled 34,000 miles to visit 16 cities in 13 countries. They promoted the #MakeItCount hashtag which was shared by millions of followers on Twitter and Instagram through pictures and tweets. This viral campaign gave Nike an 18% increase in profit in 2012 i.e. in the year the product was released.

## **METRICS**

- **Analysis and Reports**

Google Analytics is a free tool used to track the volume of visits, leads and customers to a social media channel. It helps in tracking the behaviour and other information used to track the demographics and the type of device used by website visitors from social media networks. This study helps marketers choose the social media network and the type of to utilise. Software like Consumer's online brand related activities (COBRA) and strategy Ewom i.e. electronic word of mouth contribute to collection of data enhancing marketer's strategy.

- **Impact and Reach**

Social media networks like Facebook, Twitter, etc. can help amass a large online audience. However, a large audience i.e. mere numbers do not guarantee a higher rate of revenue. Vigorous activity on the platform like sharing, tweeting and the like may give an idea to the marketer regarding the success of social media marketing.

- **Return on investment**

The time and efforts spent on social media networks cannot be directly quantified. Therefore, it is only possible to measure revenue generated by comparing customer base with market analytical value and marketing efforts to sales.

- **Customer response**

In the present, it is increasingly common to see customers express their views and disregards with respect to brands, products and services, openly on social media networks like Facebook and twitter. According to a recent survey, 72% people expected responses to their tweets within an hour of posting. This helps the marketer to understand and cater to customer's expectations.

## Summary

Social media opens up a host of new avenues of marketing techniques to companies and entrepreneurs alike. New and emerging technologies have narrowed and almost diminished the communication gap between the seller and buyer through real time response features, availability and access to internet and ease of use. However, increased presence of marketers on social media have led to numerous advertisements on the networks which when it will reach saturation point, will result in customers moving away to another medium with fewer advertisements.

On a concluding note, it is safe to say that using social media as a marketing tool will be a standard practice for the foreseeable future due to advancements in science and technology and its ease of adaptability. Social media and marketing are going to be a synonymous for a long period of time.

## References:

- Wikipedia
- Blue Fountain Media
- Wordstream
- Instagram
- Youtube

