

“A CRITICAL STUDY OF CUSTOMER REVIEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS”

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Abstract: With the growth and popularity of various social media platforms, many companies have been using them to participate with customers and encourage them for the user-generated content or in simple words comments and reviews about their products. Customer reviews are increasingly available online for a wide variety of products and services. They complement other information made available by digital storefronts such as product descriptions, expert’s reviews, and tailored advice generated by automated recommendation systems.

In this paper, the user-generated posts or reviews from selected Social Media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram of selected brands have been critically studied to understand how users react and reviews these brands. Sample have been taken from three industries namely (i) Hindi Movies (ii) Smartphones, and (iii) Hotels and further 3 brands from each industry have been selected to understand about the customer reviews.

Such type of Study will pave path for further researchers to understand and explore the potential of Social Media and user generated content.

Keywords: Social Media, eWOM, Customer Review, Online, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram

1. Introduction

“Social media isn’t a fad, it’s a fundamental shift in the way we communicate.” (Qualman, 2010)

Communication is truly changing as a result of social media utilisation and thus the dynamics of human relationships take on a new perspective. The rules of relationship marketing have been redefined. Indeed, social media platforms allow consumers to form a sort of tribal community around a product or brand. For many businesses today social media is their largest web presence, overtaking their company websites and email programmes (Neff, 2010). Thus social media has mutated how businesses interact and communicate with their customers as well as how they establish and implement their customer relationship management (CRM) policies. The main difference between traditional CRM and social CRM is that the latter involves the customer proactively. The customer is empowered and improving the customer experience is a central goal (Morgan, 2010).

Social media channels represent a huge opportunity for marketers in terms of word of mouth referrals. The internet and social media remove the barriers that existed in the past in traditional word of mouth such as location, time and access.

2. Literature Review

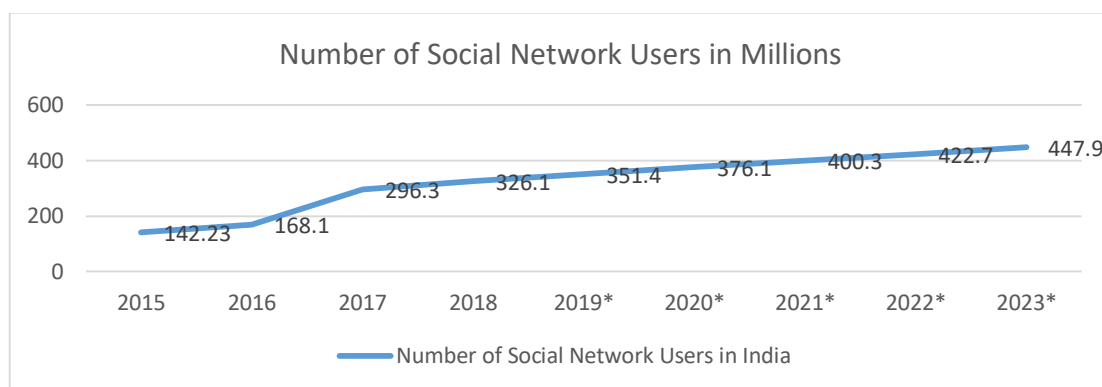
2.1 Internet and The Growth of Netizens in India

With over 460 million internet users, India is the second largest online market, ranked only behind China. By 2021, there will be about 635.8 million internet users in India. Despite the large base of internet users in India, only 26 percent of the Indian population accessed the internet in 2015. This is a significant increase in comparison to the previous years, considering the internet penetration rate in India stood at about 10 percent in 2011.

The FICCI-KPMG Indian Media and Entertainment Industry Report 2015 indicates that there has been a steep growth of internet usage in India. While the percentage of internet penetration is still pretty low by Western standards, 19%, in absolute values these are impressive numbers in a country of the size of India. Growth of the Internet in India is very close to overtaking the US as the second largest population of internet users. In fact, many say that India has already surpassed the US and is the second largest country in terms of internet usage, only next to China. The growth of internet usage in India has been fuelled by the increasing smartphone usage in the country. The number of smartphone users in India was boom by 402 million in December, 2015 according to the Internet and Mobile Association of India.

2.2 India on Social Media

Research shows that Indian internet users spend the majority of their time online on social media.



Facebook is the dominant social network in India, and has the largest base of Facebook users in the world at 241 million, followed closely by the United States at 240 million. Statistics from the Global Web Index show that 54 % of Indian social network users now also have a Google+ account.

LinkedIn in India has the second largest user base in the world, just behind the US in terms of user numbers (42 million). In an interview with The Indian Economic Times, Hari Krishnan, LinkedIn's business head in India, says that mobile use changes a LinkedIn user's behaviour, focusing on "four key areas: user profiles, status updates, groups and the inbox."

Video consumption in India is also on the rise. YouTube is the second most visited site in India according to Alexa, and is preceded only by Google.co.in in total traffic.

Facebook: Facebook is the fourth most popular page in India, after Google.co.in, YouTube.com, and Google.com. As of January 2017, users of Facebook in India were 24 % female and 76 % male.

According to Socialbakers, the most popular Facebook pages in India are: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi (43,061,323 fans); cricketer and captain of the Indian national team Virat Kohli (36,046,386); and Bollywood actor and producer Salman Khan (35,632,958 fans).

Twitter: The number of Twitter users in India has expanded rapidly in recent years. Currently, the platform has 23.2 million active monthly users. However, Twitter accounts for only 17 % of all Indian social network usage.

The most followed Twitter accounts in India are: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi (36,439,287 followers); Indian film actor Amitabh Bachchan (30,889,231 followers); and Indian film actor and producer Shah Rukh Khan (30,088,806 followers).

YouTube: In 2016, users in India spent over 48 hours a month viewing content on YouTube. 70 % of YouTube viewers are under the age of 35, and were 38 % female and 62 % male. Usage of YouTube in India has grown at a rate of 90 % since 2015.

The most popular YouTube channels in India are: Indian music label and film studio T-Series (25,684,901,483 total video views and 27,469,467 subscribers); Hindi-language based channel Sony Entertainment Television – India (11,945,946,483 total video views and 16,106,246 subscribers); and Indian cable and satellite television channel Zee TV (11,334,373,263 total video views and 8,995,983 subscribers).

2.3 User Generated Content (UGC) and the Rise of eWOM

User Generated Content (UGC) marked its initial traces with product reviews and blogs. However, the arrival of social media took it to a completely new level with the support of the picture and video economy. Leveraging this kind of content can help brands not only create a higher level of interactivity, but also makes content management easier as the brand and the consumers are on the same page. UGC not only makes the consumers feel an important part of the brand, but also manages to make each consumer a brand ambassador of the product.

Due to the connectivity and the interactions among consumers, new forms of content generation, communication, and collaboration were created e.g. user comments, photo posts, videos, podcasts, rankings, reviews, articles and blogs, which has resulted in a huge flow of electronic Word of Mouth (Filho, Tan, 2009, in Akar, Topcu, 2011). Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM), which is a part of user generated content (UGC, also known as user-created content), has significant impact on consumer behaviour. According to Cheung, Lee, Thadani (2009, in Akar, Topcu, 2011) it has become a dominant channel that influences buying decisions of consumers in the online environment as well as offline. User generated content can be a positive or negative statement made by potential, actual or former customer, about a product or a company, and is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the social media.

2.4 Types of eWOM

Social network sites in their essence are built on eWOM in various forms and appearances. A concise typology of eWOM communications based on the level of user interactivity and participation, and thus locate these forms in a 2 (communication: collective, individual) x 2 (C2C interactivity: low, high) framework is mentioned below.

Communication	Collective	Many to One (computer by computer) Overall Average Ratings Number of Votes Number of Downloads	Many to Many (highly involved) Discussion forum Wiki ListServ
	Individual	One to Many (text based) Descriptive Product Reviews Blogs	One to One (private) Email Instant Messaging
		Low	High

Level of C2C Interactivity

Source: Adapted from Xia *et al.* (2009, p.139)

3. Research Methodology

In this study a sample of 9 Companies which represent three different Industries Namely Hindi Film Industry, Smartphone Makers and Hospitality Industry have been taken. For the three samples taken under Hindi Film Industry the time horizon is pre and post two months of the movie release date, for the samples taken under Smartphone Makers and Hospitality Industry time horizon of One Year i.e. January 2018 to December 2018 has been taken. Selected Social Media platforms with the maximum presence of customers namely Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Instagram have been taken to examine the online reviews posted by customers.

The data collected is analysed through various Electronic Data Processing (EDP) methods for the findings and outcomes.

3.1 Limitation of the Study

1. Only four major Social Media Platforms are selected for this study, as there are other social media platforms also available which have not been taken in consideration for this study.
2. Only three products/ companies have been taken from three industries, as the overall number of products/ companies in the industry is huge so the findings of research cannot completely depict the whole situation.
3. Online reviews are one of the element that shapes a customer behaviour, thus the reviews and its analysis cannot be treated as the sole reason behind success of failure of product delivered by companies.

4. Data Analysis

4.1 Hindi Film Industry

Film promotion has been now considered as important as actual making of the film. Although the history of the film marketing can be traced back from the days of the inception of the film itself, it has reshaped its periphery time and often. It has gone through the age of posters, wall papers, print ads etc. New Media is the latest addition to this arena. Film has also started utilising the potential of new media completely in terms of marketing and promotions. Indian Hindi film industry is too not far behind. It has also used new media as well as social media forum to make people aware of the film and to drive them towards theatre.

A. Uri: The Surgical Strike

Release Date: 11th January 2019

Total Business on Box Office as of 28th February 2019: 359.73 Crore Rupees

Social Media Platform →	Facebook	YouTube	Twitter	Instagram
Presence on Social Media Platform	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Number of Unique Posts	2992	348	521	4446
Total Social Media Reach	1,34,41,548	1,28,24,798	70,82,133	3,57,15,597
Estimated Social Media Interactions	46,84,671			
Estimated Total Social Media Reach	14,62,65,294			

(Source: Brands24 Report)

B. Padman

Release Date: 9th February 2018

Total Business on Box Office as of 28th February 2019: 206.57 Crore Rupees

Social Media Platform →	Facebook	YouTube	Twitter	Instagram
Presence on Social Media Platform	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Number of Unique Posts	1220	484	831	3211
Total Social Media Reach	11,14,517	10,57,181	38,33,411	29,98,076
Estimated Social Media Interactions	23,95,348			
Estimated Total Social Media Reach	7,35,41,072			

(Source: Brands24 Report)

C. 3 IdiotsRelease Date: 25th December 2009Total Business on Box Office as of 28th February 2019: 460.8 Crore Rupees

Social Media Platform →	Facebook	YouTube	Twitter	Instagram
Presence on Social Media Platform	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Number of Unique Posts	150	259	187	265
Total Social Media Reach	69,96,790	1,14,286	1,45,991	98,734
Estimated Social Media Interactions	14,19,018			
Estimated Total Social Media Reach	2,170,236			

(Source: Brands24 Report)

4.2 Smartphone Makers

Social media is a driving factor for engagement of users and brands. There have been brands that entered the market with a huge marketing campaign only on the social media, and have done so well that since the inception to being one of the best brands in the country, they have used social media at every step.

A. Xiaomi (Mi India)

Social Media Platform →	Facebook	YouTube	Twitter	Instagram
Official Presence	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Total Number of Posts	-	324	8,823	1449
Total Number of Subscribers	32,81,728	7,50,414	7,80,414	12,00,000
Avg. No. of Online Revives per Post	178	1748	451	190
Estimated Social Media Interactions	1,31,79,150			
Estimated Total Social Media Reach	10,38,85,694			

(Source: Data collected from Official Pages of Brands on various Social Media Platforms)

B. OnePlus (One Plus India)

Social Media Platform →	Facebook	YouTube	Twitter	Instagram
Official Presence	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Total Number of Posts	-	271	2,95,000	1016
Total Number of Subscribers	1,22,34,550	7,01,410	1,69,000	20,00,000
Avg. No. of Online Revives per Post	268	1422	304	48,533
Estimated Social Media Interactions	1,89,65,970			
Estimated Total Social Media Reach	39,42,64,589			

(Source: Data collected from Official Pages of Brands on various Social Media Platforms)

C. Samsung Mobiles (India)

Social Media Platform →	Facebook	YouTube	Twitter	Instagram
Official Presence	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Total Number of Posts	-	491	2,55,000	411
Total Number of Subscribers	-	28,86,912	18,60,345	46,40,447
Avg. No. of Online Revives per Post	-	461	114	23,477
Estimated Social Media Interactions	22,51,787			
Estimated Total Social Media Reach	4,17,05,150			

(Source: Data collected from Official Pages of Brands on various Social Media Platforms)

4.3 Hospitality Industry

Hoteliers today realize that the key to successfully know and engage the audience is by staying in constant touch through various social media platforms. These days, hoteliers and restaurateurs are busy sharing content and running campaigns about their services and are learning to leverage social media to drive growth in all areas.

A. ITC Hotels

Social Media Platform →	Facebook	YouTube	Twitter	Instagram
Official Presence	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Star Ratings (Out of 5)	4.5	NA	NA	NA
Total Number of Subscribers	3,43,606	14,649	24,300	49,700
Positive Mentions by Customers	212			
Negative Mentions by Customers	2			
Estimated Social Media Interactions	1,30,172			
Estimated Total Social Media Reach	43,87,068			

(Source: Data collected from Official Pages of Brands on various Social Media Platforms)

B. Oberoi Hotels

Social Media Platform →	Facebook	YouTube	Twitter	Instagram
Official Presence	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Total Number of Subscribers	2,06,472	35,303	28,300	62,900
Positive Mentions by Customers	175			
Negative Mentions by Customers	8			
Estimated Social Media Interactions	20,019			
Estimated Total Social Media Reach	5,90,945			

(Source: Data collected from Official Pages of Brands on various Social Media Platforms)

C. Taj Hotels

Social Media Platform →	Facebook	YouTube	Twitter	Instagram
Official Presence	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Total Number of Subscribers	3,19,132	16,215	36,700	1,27,000
Positive Mentions by Customers	1,288			
Negative Mentions by Customers	21			
Estimated Social Media Interactions	4,44,907			
Estimated Total Social Media Reach	1,13,27,249			

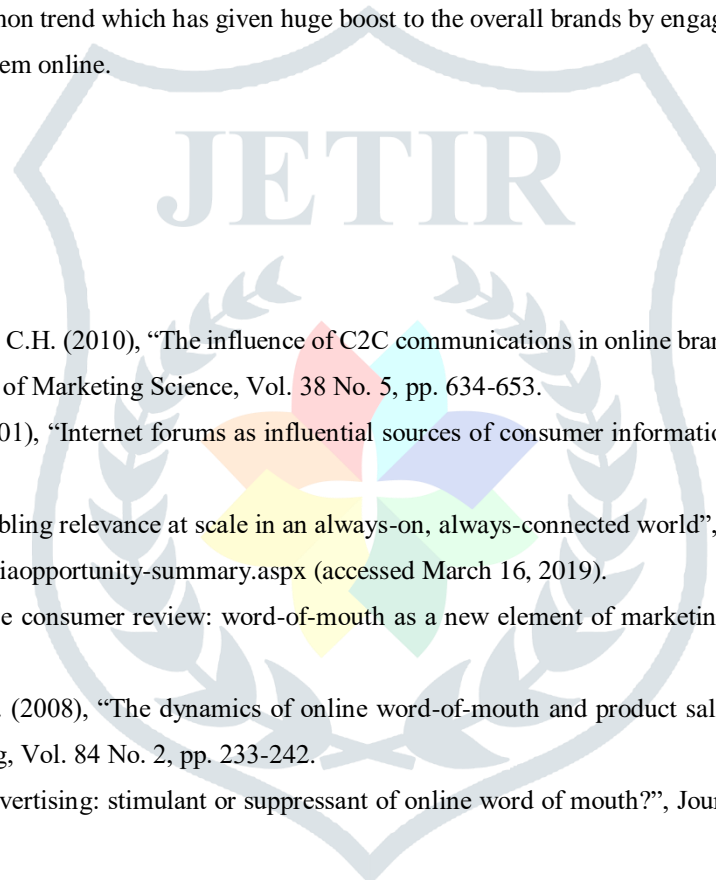
(Source: Data collected from Official Pages of Brands on various Social Media Platforms)

5. Findings

After studying the online reviews mentioned in the different social media platforms of the selected brands/ companies following are the major findings of the study:

1. Social networking today is increasingly dominated by visual content such as images and videos. Because of this, analysing the content and make-up of text will only get brands so far in understanding what their audience is posting about.
2. The marketing window for movies are of 45-60 days. In some cases, films create milestones much in advance. Movie makers have realised that if they build a community in advance, when the time comes, they can launch it in the community.
3. When it comes to Appeal Power or the persuasiveness of the campaign, YouTube is the leader. Most moviegoers make the decision to watch a movie based on the music album of the film which they watch or listen to on YouTube.
4. Facebook is yet to make a huge dent in the music promotion aspect of film marketing. For now, music videos of only 45-second length can be watched on the platform.
5. Xiaomi effectively used social media to always keep the users informed about the sales, the number of units sold, which led to a better brand value with time.
6. Calling your Fans as your family, incentivizing them with timely gifts, greetings, and mentions would make them feel a part of the brand's legacy. Again, citing an example of OnePlus and Xiaomi, the companies call their fans to launches, give them devices before others to make them an important part of their community. This not just makes them loyal towards the brand but also keeps pulling in more fans who feel that the brand is really into their fans.

7. Samsung has the biggest audience with over 12 million followers. But even with about 11 times the followers of OnePlus, Samsung lags behind in terms of customer engagement.
8. The top smartphone marketing campaigns on Twitter in January came from Xiaomi and OnePlus. Xiaomi had eight of the top 12 posts to OnePlus's four.
9. OnePlus and Xiaomi took the top two spots on Twitter in terms of brand score. The total number of followers across all major smartphone brands was 18,340,027 in January, and Samsung Mobile had a 68 percent share of the audience. But because Samsung didn't post as frequently as some of its competitors, it only had 3 percent total audience engagement.
10. Taj is keeping up with its legacy of being the finest hotel on social media as it the most spoken about hotel and people are actively engaging with them on various portals. Followed by Oberoi and ITC, surprising to see Leela comes next as it has the least impressive presence on social media.
11. Most of the mentions about these hotels are people checking-in on Instagram or sharing that they will be visiting that hotel in near future that falls under neutral part of the chart.
12. The negative and positive reviews are about their food quality, facilities and overall experience.
13. Online Contests are a common trend which has given huge boost to the overall brands by engaging more and more customer initially offline and then bringing them online.



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