



SOCIAL MEDIA AS A MARKETING TOOL AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS

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Abstract

Over the last two decades, the advent of digitalization has radically altered businesses' marketing strategies. In a world dominated by technology, entrepreneurs and marketers recognize the need to keep up with the rapid speed of change or risk becoming obsolete. In today's environment, the days of a brick-and-mortar business plan are fading away. Social media, which is used to communicate and share with customers, is one of the most extensively utilized media in the present world. It's practically impossible to create a marketing strategy nowadays without including social media. Using social media for online marketing is a must for all businesses, especially in areas where trends change often, such as the fashion industry and handicrafts industry. The study uses empirical research to establish the utility of social media as a marketing tool and the extent to which it assists customers in making purchase decisions, It looks into the effectiveness of social media marketing in terms of increasing income, as well as the potential stumbling blocks to success.

Introduction

We've seen a significant transformation in how business is performed and individuals interact over the last 20-25 years. Businesses' marketing methods have significantly changed as a result of the introduction of digitalization. Entrepreneurs and marketers know the necessity to keep up with the quick pace of change in a world dominated by technology, or risk becoming outdated. Accessibility of computers, the Internet, and e-commerce have all had a major

impact on how businesses operate and promote. The use of social media technologies is growing rapidly, and we can anticipate it to have a comparable influence on businesses in the present as well as in the future.

Social media is one of the most widely utilized forms of communication in the world. According to Datareportal and Kepios, as of April 2022, the world's active social media users numbered 4.65 billion out of a total population of 7.87 billion people, or around 58.7% of the total global population are social media users. As of April 2022, there were 467 million active social media users in India, out of a total population of 1.40 billion people, or roughly around 47%, with an average time spent on social media through any device of 2 hours 36 minutes each day (The Global Statistics). The most used social media platforms in India are YouTube, Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter and etc (Stastia, January 2021).

According to Hootsuite, 93 percent of Indonesians aged 16 to 64 years undertake e-commerce activities, with 90 percent browsing online for information about items or services to buy, 90 percent accessing online retail stores, and 88 percent purchasing a product online (Riyanto, 2020). This situation demonstrates that social media is a medium that is seen to have a lot of potential for businesses to utilise to sell their products to customers.

Businesses that learn to use new technologies profit greatly when new technologies become available. Technology-driven corporations such as Microsoft, eBay, Amazon, and Google are some of the most well-known examples. Social media has become one of the most popular channels among Indian adolescents in a short period of time. Every business owner wants to know how social media may provide value for their company, and social media marketing is the latest trending marketing idea. Naturally people are sociable creatures that gather and exchange knowledge that is valuable to them. Understanding how technology is making it simpler for consumers to interact socially with their social networks is important to social media marketing and how that knowledge may benefit your business. Whether for personal, business-to-consumer, or business-to-business reasons, more and more of your consumers utilise social media in their everyday lives. It's a widespread misunderstanding that social media and social networking sites (SNS) are the same thing. Social media platforms allow people to share and debate information. It is a type of online media that invites all members to provide comments and contribute. It is a social instrument of two way communication facilitating the sharing of information between users within a defined network via web 2.0 (O'Reilly, 2005). It entails online activities in which the user assists in the development of content. This type of media encourages user participation, which may be as basic as leaving comments or voting, or as sophisticated as recommending material to other users based on the preferences of individuals who have similar interests and lifestyles. As a result, social media may be defined as a wide word that encompasses behaviours in which individuals rapidly generate, share, bookmark, and network material. Social

networking sites, on the other hand, are places where people may build communities of interest and interact with others. To interact with individuals and establish connections, social networking sites make use of social media technologies. Social networking sites allow individuals to construct their profile within a bounded system, share with other users and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

As a result, social networking sites might be considered a type of social media. The growing reliance on technology for fundamental communication underscores the need of examining how these social networking sites impact daily operations.

A social networking site can be joined by anybody, including teenagers and young adults, women, men, rich customers, and the elderly. Once a user has enrolled, he or she may begin to socialise and build a network of people who have same interests or aspirations. Sites like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn are changing how people form, maintain, and grow a variety of social ties, from deep friendships to casual acquaintances. Before making a purchase, today's consumers want to know more about the goods. Most significantly, social networks are incredibly capable of informing and influencing purchasing decisions, since many users now place greater faith in their peers' opinions than in marketing strategists'. Customers now have the ability to speak back to brands and share their thoughts about them. Marketers have no choice but to treat them differently and with more respect as a result.

Scope and Objectives of the study

❖ Scope of the Study

The study's scope was confined to simply social media marketing. The study was limited to the Delhi, NCR region and Noida and Greater Noida region since it has a higher internet penetration rate and a large number of social networking site users.

❖ Objectives of the Study

- To determine the extent to which social media aids customers in making purchasing decisions.
- To investigate the discrepancy between what consumers expect from social media and how well it performs.
- To provide ideas for bridging the gap between expectations and performance in order to increase the efficacy of the programme.

Significance of the study

Because social media plays such an important part in consumer equity and profitability in today's firms, the conclusions of this study will help organisations design technology marketing structures. Because technology and social media are so pervasive in today's culture, it's critical for companies to stay on top of the latest developments that might help them grow. The findings of this study might help firms improve their social media marketing efforts and increase their chances of future success. This research might aid in identifying areas where social media marketing for company could be lacking. This research might help business owners develop more effective social media marketing strategies.

Assumptions

The following assumptions were considered when performing this research. The following assumptions were made:

- Everyone has access to social media in some form.
- People utilise social media to look for or learn about new service providers or goods.
- Individuals' shopping decisions are impacted by social media.

Limitations

Because this study has several limitations, the conclusions must be carefully examined.

- Only 20 people who use social media on a regular basis will be examined
- There isn't enough time allotted to each response
- The study is only open to people in Delhi, NCR and Noida region.

Delimitations

- Only those between the ages of 18 and 30 are being evaluated by the researcher
- The study is only open to people who live in Delhi, NCR and Noida region.
- Each responder is given a questionnaire with 16 questions to complete.
- The questionnaire was created to acquire demographic information as well as behavioural ratings linked to social media marketing.

Definitions of terms

- **Social Media** : Computer-mediated tools that allow users to create and share information, ideas, career interests, and other kinds of expression through virtual communities and networks.
- **Social Networking** : An act of involvement in which people with similar interests band together and form bonds through the internet community.
- **Return on Investment (ROI)** : A performance metric for evaluating an investment's efficiency or comparing the efficiency of several distinct assets.
- **Social Media Marketing** : The act of attracting traffic or attention through the use of social media networks.
- **Customer Equity** : The worth of a company's customers' potential future revenue throughout the course of its existence.
- **Customer Relationship Management (CRM)** : Companies' practices, methods, and technology for managing and analyzing customer interactions and data throughout the customer lifecycle with the purpose of strengthening customer relationships, aiding with customer retention, and driving sales growth.
- **Instant Messaging (IM)** : An electronic communication that is transmitted in real time through the Internet and is thus immediately viewable on the recipient's computer screen.

LITERATURE REVIEW

- **Social Media :**

Nowadays, social media is a common tool in business. Activities involving two people communicating with each other. Various parts of life appear to be quite difficult without social media. In terms of efficacy and efficiency, it's at a bare minimum. One of them is from the corporate world. The use of social media has the potential to increase engagement with consumers through communication and capacity building to promote programs, products, and services (Neiger et al., 2012).

Users can use social media to send and receive digital content or information through some online social network. Social media can be defined as a collection of software based on digital technology, usually presented as applications and websites; its users can use it to send and receive digital content or information through some online social network. The major platform and its features, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, are referred here as social media (Appel et al., 2020).

- **Impact of Social Media on Business :**

The widespread creation and consumption of content has produced a highly competitive online ecosystem in which different forms of material compete for the user community's limited attention (Asur, 2012). The popularity of social media grew first as a result of the large number of users connecting with one another. Businesses quickly saw how much online attention social media sites were attracting and grasped the potential of attention that social media can produce (Asur, 2012). As a result, web traffic became a monetary asset. Since then, social media marketing has grown in popularity as a type of internet marketing.

Businesses have taken use of the numerous marketing tactics available on social media. One idea is to base their revenue model on adverts similar to those used by Google. When Google first dominated internet searches in the early 2000s, it didn't take them long to figure out a then-unique model of search monetization: online advertising (Asur, 2012). This strategy is profitable since most individuals spend a significant amount of time on the internet. The availability of social media platforms has increased the number of people who are continually on the internet. Businesses have also set up their own social media accounts, which allow customers to subscribe to their feeds and serve as a venue for consumer-to-business contact. Businesses may

use this to not only communicate with their customers, but also to observe what their competitors are up to and how they interact with their customers.

- **Social Media Marketing :**

Entrepreneurs frequently utilise social media as one of their marketing techniques to advertise the things they offer in today's digital era. According to them (Appel et al., 2020), Marketers may utilise social media as another form of digital marketing channel to engage with customers through advertising. Nowadays, social media is frequently viewed as a means of spreading information, and it is sometimes referred to as an online type of word-of-mouth marketing. Social media is often utilised in marketing, public relations, offices, or other departments with direct ties to consumers and stakeholders by many organisations, enterprises, NGOs, and governments (Evans & McKee, 2010).

Simply expressed, social media marketing refers to the use of a social media platform to promote a business and its products. Because it is so easy to contact targeted clients, social media marketing is gaining popularity and is now a new marketing trend (Nadaraja & Yazdanifard, 2014).

- **Effectiveness of Social Media Marketing :**

Although there are certain issues with its implementation, social media marketing's efficacy helps to SMEs' success and future growth (Musa et al., 2016). Customer involvement and content quality positively link with social media marketing performance, according to (Shahid 2019). Customer engagement is positively influenced by the user experience and frequency of visits.

Only if businesses on social media supply consumers with accurate and timely information will social media be helpful as a marketing tool (Bashar et al., 2012). The efficacy of using social media is partly determined by the social media marketing methods employed. Effective social media marketing will greatly aid in the creation and promotion of brand awareness, resulting in increased sales (Al-Mohammadi & Gazzaz, 2020).

- **Social Media Today**

Data was difficult to comprehend prior to the development of technology. In today's world, information is readily available. Today's culture is living in the Information Age, which is defined as “a period that will be characterized by the ability

of individuals to transfer information freely, and to have instant access to information that would have been difficult or impossible to find previously” (Asur, 2012).

Adaptation is getting increasingly difficult as technology evolves at a rapid pace. However, juggling this rapid change in business, marketing, 10 communication, research, and content is not easy (Lalwani, 2012). Users from all around the world have flocked to social media platforms. Every day, a growing number of people are drawn to social media, and this large user base has helped social media platforms become social and financial successes (Hunsinger, 2013).

Lalwani (2012) quotes “It is a new world - a world where everyone has the ability to influence opinion; a world where everyone has the ability to influence purchase; a world where distances are down to zero; a world where voice has speed greater than light; a world that pushes away any attempt to regulate it, except through mechanisms of self-regulation; the world that is today, is a world shaped by social media and the free flow of conversations that the phenomenon enables and endorses.”

- **Challenges of Social Media Marketing :**

Customers have become marketers as a result of social media marketing, with consumers being able to remark on product and service brands, putting additional pressure on businesses. This is one of the most important issues that the organisation must address (Gafni & Golan, 2016). Furthermore, (Evans & McKee, 2010) suggest that social media allows customers to share their experiences with consumer items, which are deemed more trustworthy than the company's promotional commercials, hence having a substantial influence on the company's marketing operations. The next problem is social media's unrealized potential, as seen by Indonesians' increasing acceptance and eagerness to use technology (Hyun & Zamrudi, 2018).

Research Methodology

The research design, study participants, and study techniques and procedures are all detailed in the following sections.

Research Design

The research employs a descriptive research design. A survey was created to find out how respondents felt about the extent to which social media aids customers in making purchasing decisions. A descriptive correlational survey approach was utilised to examine the influence of social media marketing on individual attitudes and views. This approach was utilised to examine each participant's demographic features, such as sex and age, as well as their use of social media. In addition, each responder was asked to complete a survey questionnaire in order to learn more about the elements that influence their attitudes and views while using social media to engage with businesses. The purpose of the study was to answer the following research questions.

Research Questions

- What are people's opinions on social media usage?
- How do people feel about social media marketing?
- What influence has social media had on consumer loyalty and purchasing decisions?
- What are some ways that businesses may utilise social media to increase consumer interaction?
- What are the most crucial aspects of good social media marketing?

Procedure

The first section of the survey asks about the respondent's demographics and social media usage habits. The second section contains a series of closed-ended indirect questions focused on the influence of social media in influencing customer purchases and expectations from such medium. A total of 40 people responded to the poll, which was conducted, both, online through social networking sites as well as on person to person basis. The instrument (questionnaire) was uploaded to Google Docs and a link was sent to people via social networking sites such as Instagram and WhatsApp.

The researcher gave the questionnaire to participants in order to get a greater response rate. The study's objective and importance were briefly described prior to the questionnaire. The survey took 30 minutes to complete for the respondents. Responses were collated and examined once the surveys were finished.

Participants

The research had a total of 40 individuals. Random sampling was used to choose participants. After hearing a summary of the study, participants were given the choice of accepting or declining participation. All of the participants consented to take part and to answer each question honestly. The participants were given a maximum of 30 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

After retrieval of the completed questionnaires, responses were tabulated and the results were compiled. The results were analyzed to uncover factors or social behaviors toward social media marketing. The study used descriptive analysis to understand the impact of social media marketing on participants' attitudes and perceptions. Observations were made using the compiled results from the survey.

Findings

The replies of 40 participants, ranging in age from 18 to 30, to a questionnaire on their views toward firms employing social media marketing were studied in order to determine the relationship between social media and customer purchasing decisions and equity. This study had a response rate of 100%. The analysis of the replies to the survey given in this study is shown in the next section.

➤ Gender and age of respondents

The majority of those who responded to the survey were young males, according to the statistics.

There were 22 males (55%) and 18 females (45%) among the total of 40 response. The poll indicated that 70% of the respondents were under the age of 25, with the majority of them being Male. The remaining 30% of responders were over the age of 25. The gender distribution of the study participants is shown in Table 1. The participants' ages are depicted in Figure 1.

| Gender | No. of respondents | Percentage of respondents (%) |
|--------|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| Male | 22 | 55 |
| Female | 18 | 45 |
| Total | 40 | 100 |

Table 1: Gender of respondents

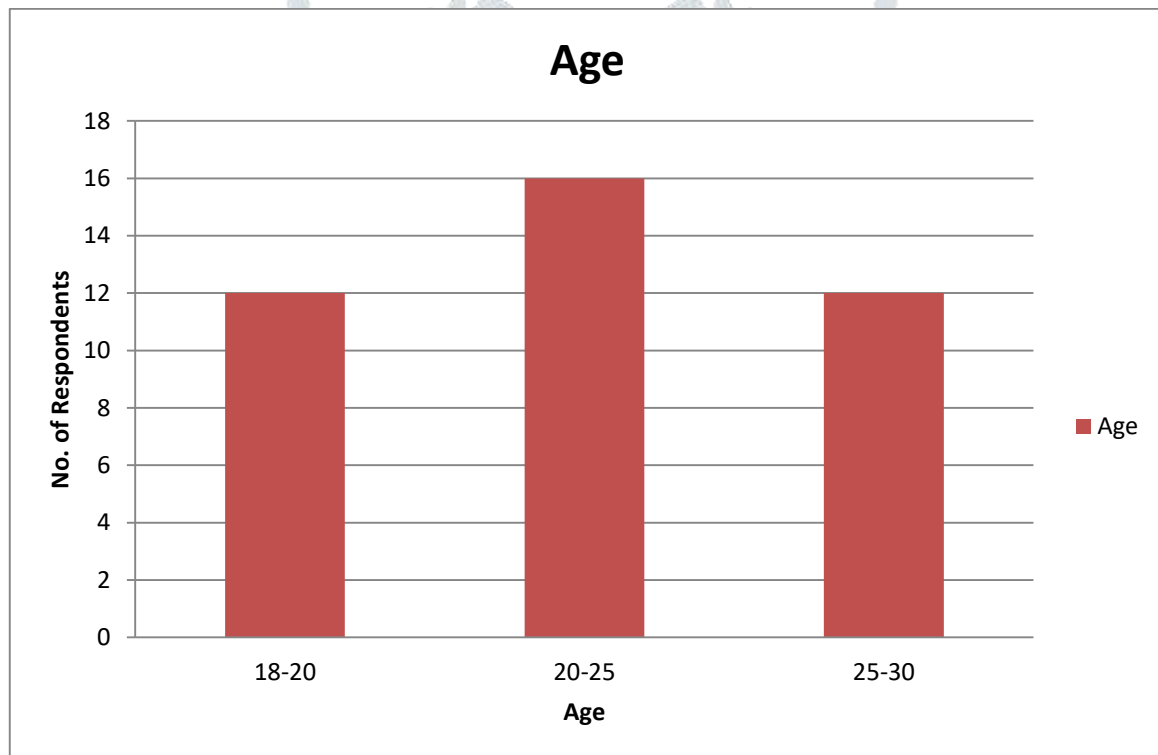


Figure 1: Age of Respondents

➤ Social Media Usage

Every responder had a social media account, reinforcing the idea that everyone uses social media in some way. 80% of the study's 40 participants had three or more social media accounts, while the remaining 20% have at least one.

The following depicts a study of the respondents' preferred social media sites. The percentages are different since most of the respondents use more than one social media platform.

- Instagram and YouTube were the most popular social media platforms among the participants 90% and 80% respectively.
- Snapchat was the 3rd most used Social media platform with 60% of people using it.
- Facebook seems less popular among the youth now a days. Majority of the regular users of Facebook are from the age group of 25-30 years. 50% of the respondents used Facebook regularly.
- Twitter was the 5th most used social media platform with 40% of the total respondent using it regularly.

➤ Time Spent on Social Media

The respondents indicated how frequently they use social media and how much time they spend on it each day. According to the findings, 97.5% of respondents said they connect to a social media platform on a daily basis. The remaining 2.5% of participants stated that they connect to a social media site three times a week (see Figure 2). 75% of those who connect every day said they spend three or more hours a day on social media on a regular basis (see Figure 3).

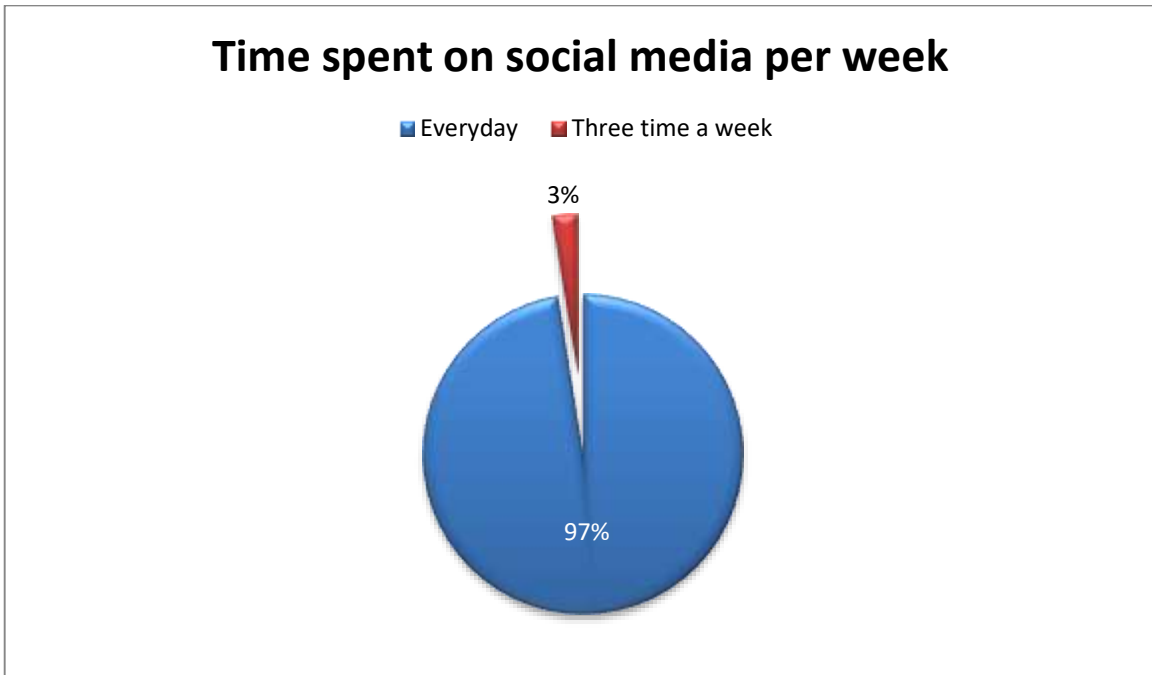
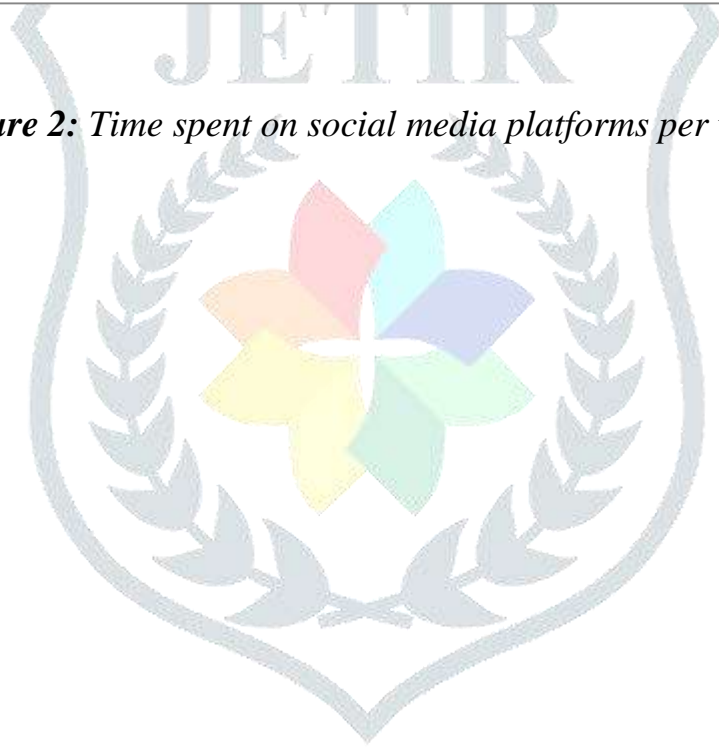


Figure 2: Time spent on social media platforms per week



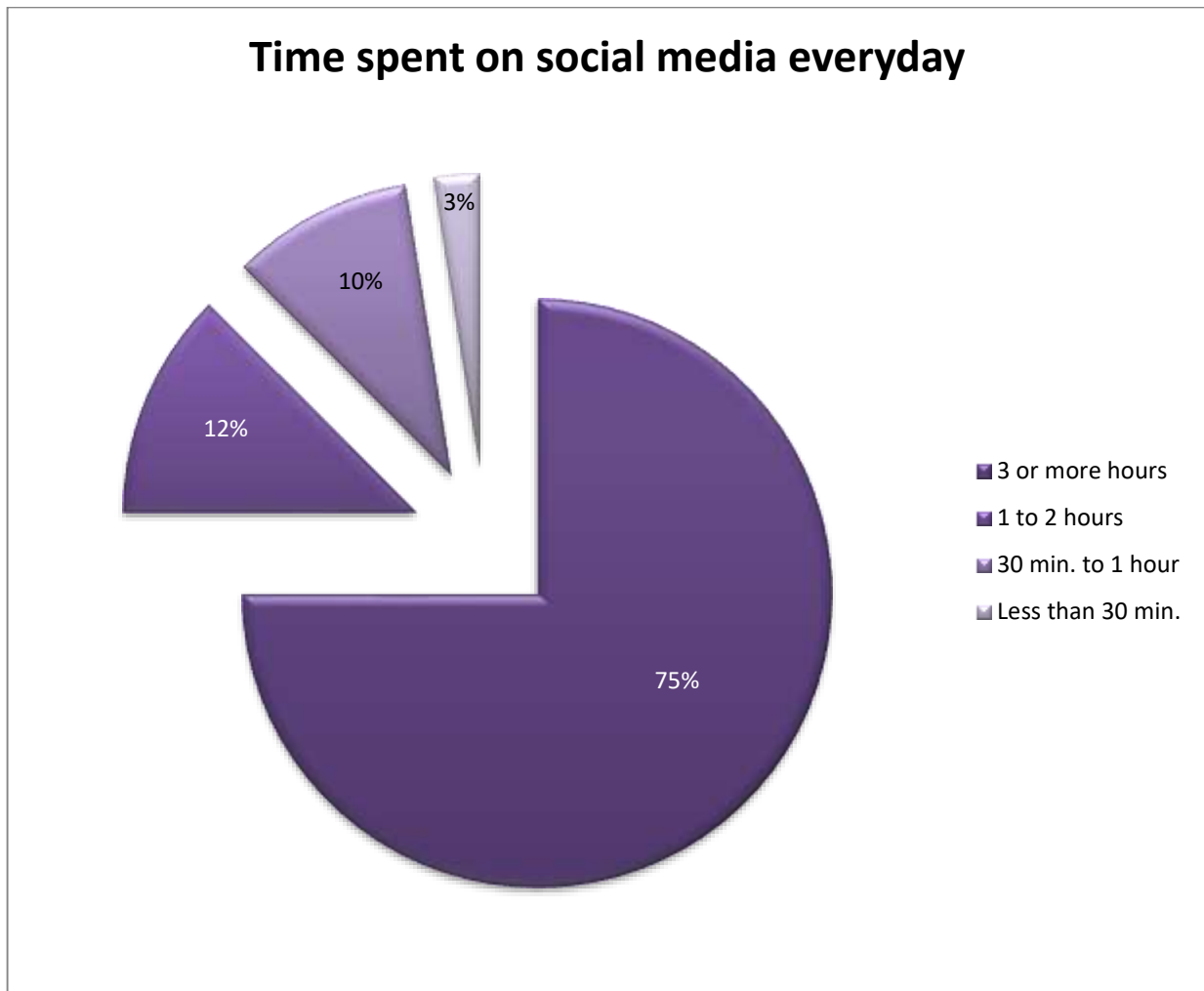


Figure 3: Time spent on social media platforms everyday

➤ Online Visibility

According to the results of the survey, 95% of the participants use social media on a daily basis. This number might be useful in determining whether or not a company should use social media as a sales strategy. Participants were also questioned if a company's internet exposure would influence their decision to buy. According to the findings, 62.5% of respondents believe that internet exposure will influence their purchase, while the remaining 37.5% believe it will not (see Figure 4).

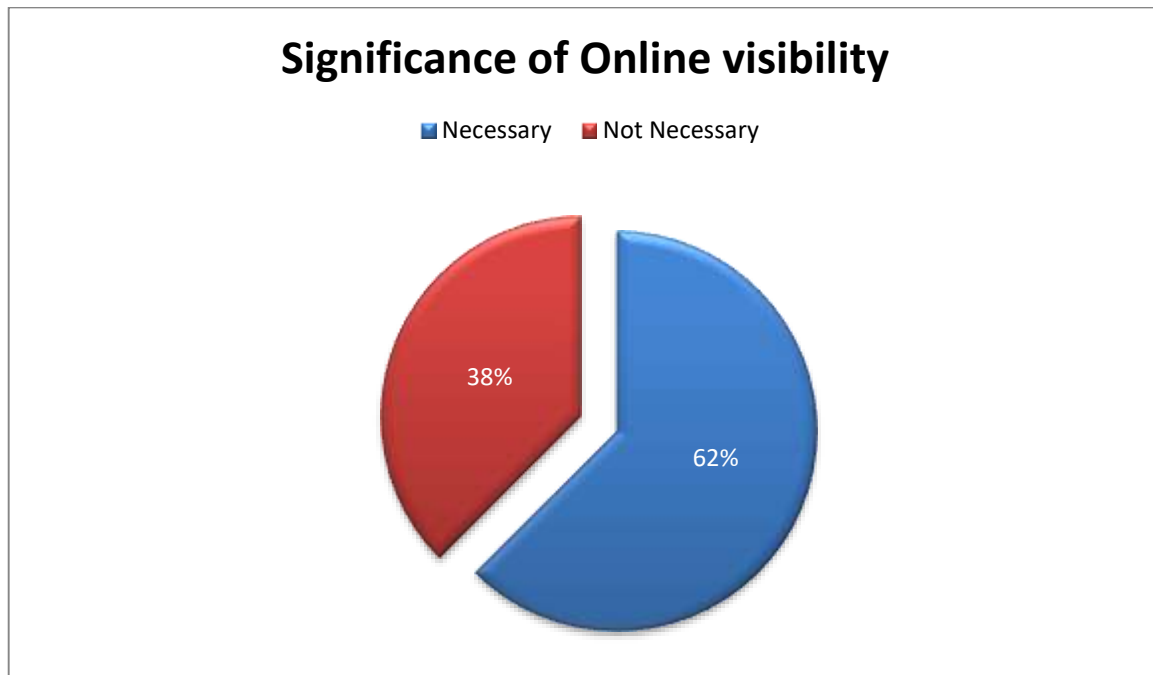


Figure 4: Significance of online visibility

➤ Descriptive Analysis

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the most essential and 5 being the least important, the participants were asked to rank the most significant elements for a business using social media. Consistency of postings, kind of content, consumer involvement, online promotions, and post scheduling is all aspects in this rating question. After tabulating the findings of the inquiry, a descriptive analysis was performed, concentrating on the most and least important factors. Customer interaction was the most essential aspect, with post timeliness being the least important. Table 2 summarises the findings.

| | Ratings Response | | | | | N | Mean Rating | Standard Deviation |
|------------------------|------------------|----------|-----------------|----|----|----|-------------|--------------------|
| | Most Important | Mod. Imp | Least Important | | | | | |
| Variables | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | | | |
| Consistency of posts | 2 | 6 | 6 | 10 | 14 | 38 | 3.73 | 1.28 |
| Type of content posted | 14 | 10 | 6 | 4 | 6 | 40 | 2.45 | 1.47 |
| Customer engagement | 18 | 14 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 40 | 1.95 | 1.19 |
| Online promotions | 6 | 8 | 19 | 6 | 8 | 38 | 3.05 | 1.39 |
| Timing of posts | 0 | 2 | 12 | 16 | 10 | 40 | 3.85 | 0.87 |

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis of What the Participants Believe are Important Factors for a Business Using Social Media

➤ Social Media Marketing

According to the findings, 60 percent of respondents post about items or services that a business provides, while the remaining 40 percent do not. Although participants may or may not post about a firm's products or services, 95% of respondents feel that if social media is integrated into marketing, a business would achieve greater outcomes in terms of consumer loyalty and profitability. Because social media has become so ingrained in our daily lives, it is critical for businesses to use it as a marketing tool. According to the findings, 75% of respondents feel that social media is the greatest method to reach a business's target market, while 25% believe that there are other effective ways to reach a target market.

➤ Social Media Activities

Because social media has dominated new technology, companies have opted to broaden their horizons by embracing this social movement. Businesses have created online profiles in the aim of recruiting online community members. Out of the 40 people who took part in this survey, 80 percent of them said they follow a company on social media. Only 35 percent of the 80 percent of respondents use social media to stay up with deals and promotions (see

Figure 5). Less than 5% of those who do not follow a business on social media keep up to speed with discounts and promotions, according to the findings (see Figure 6). The replies to the questions indicate that, while individuals are unlikely to share promotions or keep track of a business on social media, they are aware of it. Despite this hypothesis, the data demonstrate that 90% of respondents took advantage of a bargain they learned about through social media.

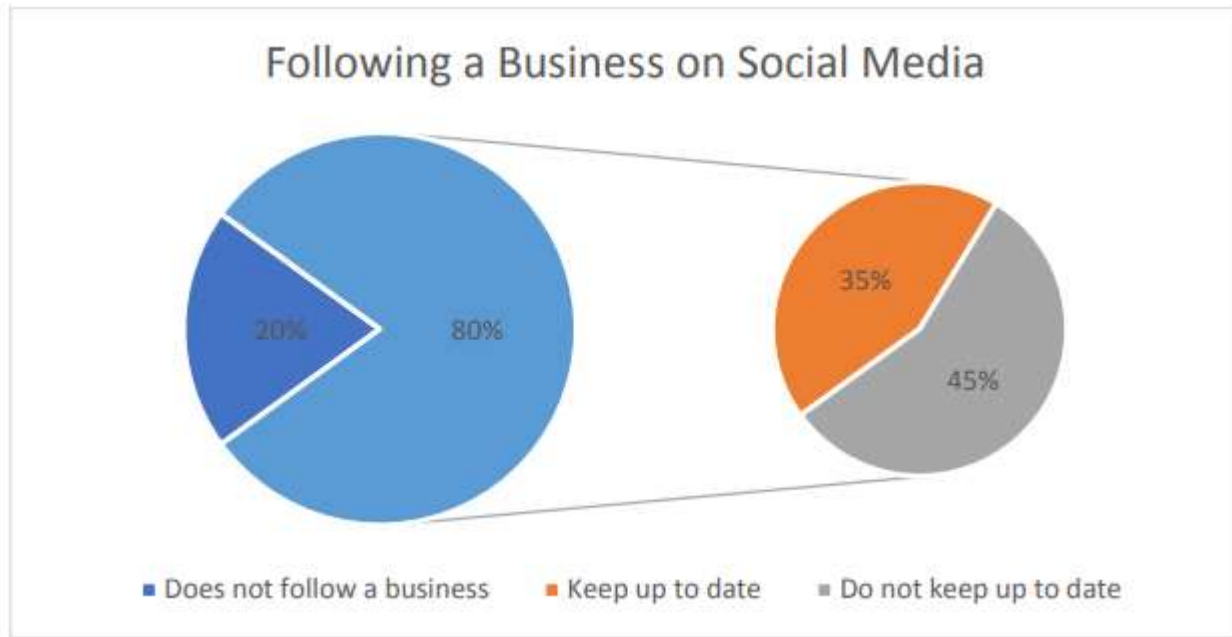


Figure 5: Respondents following a business on social media

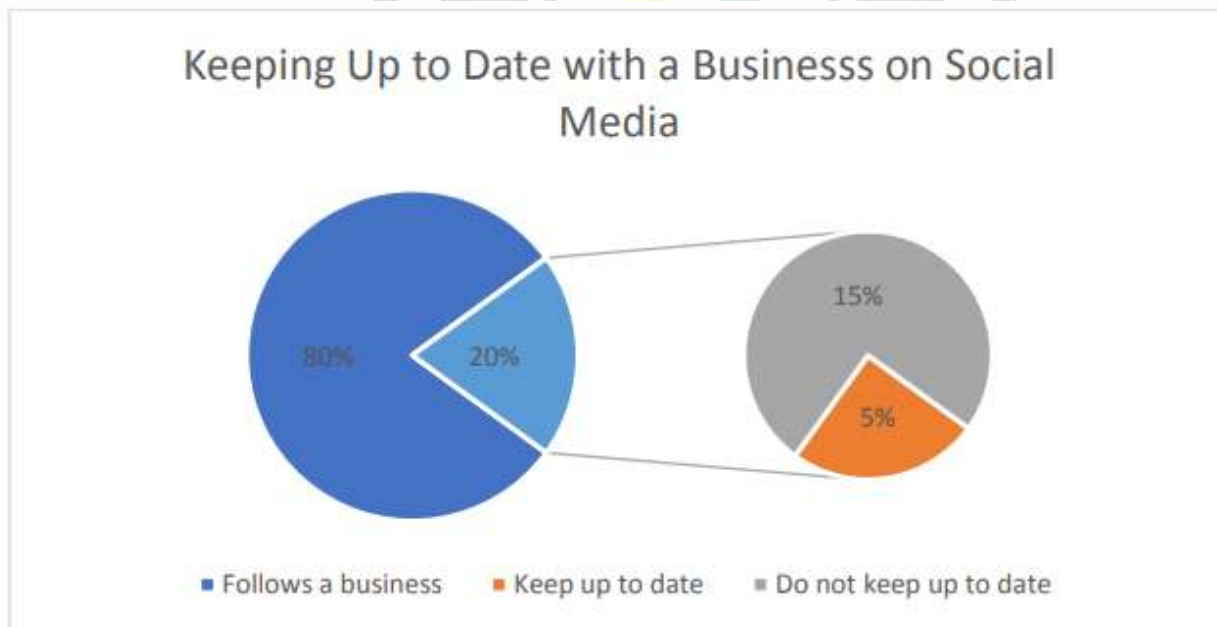


Figure 6: Respondents keeping up to date with businesses on social media

➤ Social Media Experience

The participants were asked if they would be willing to share a positive experience they had with a company on social media. According to the findings, 20% of respondents are extremely likely to share a social media experience, 45% are somewhat likely, and 35% are unlikely (see Figure 7).

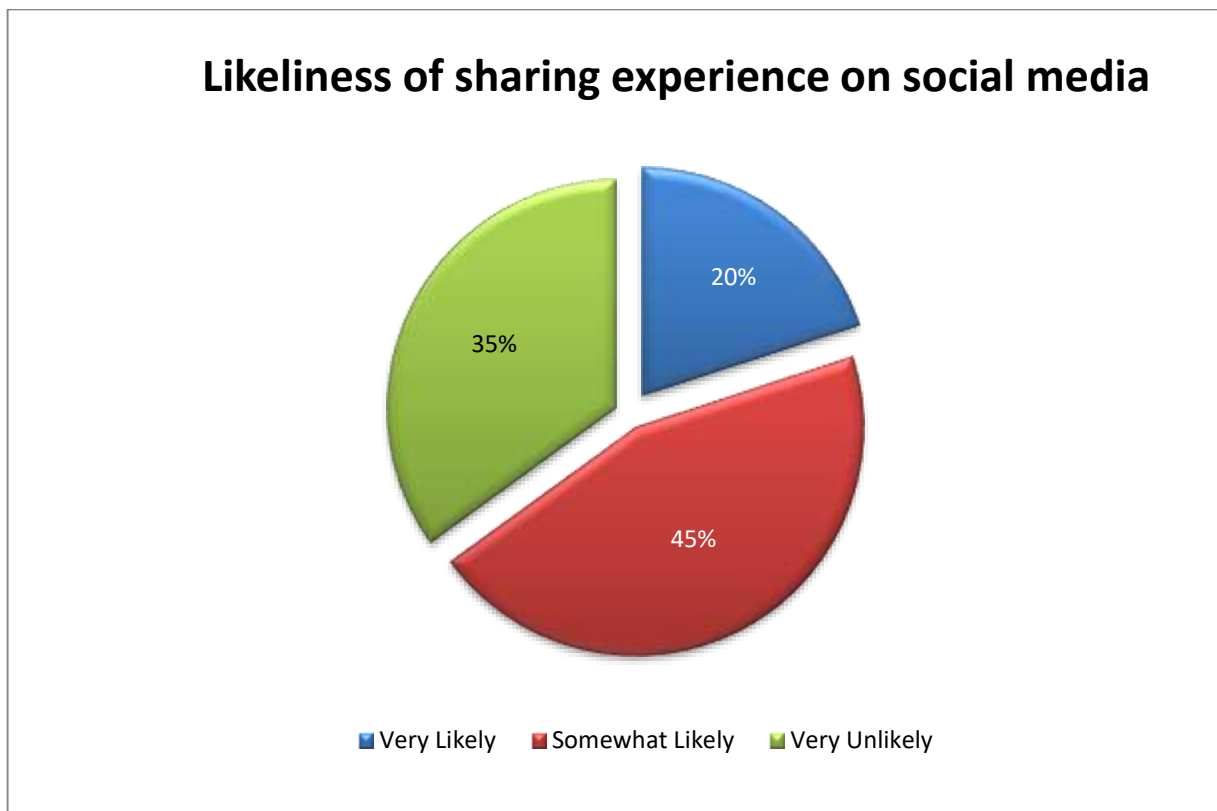


Figure 7: Likeliness of sharing experience on social media

Participants were also asked if they would share deals or promotions offered by a business on their social media sites. The findings suggest that 10% of respondents are extremely likely to share a sale or promotion code with others, 40% are moderately likely, and 50% are very unlikely (see Figure 8). People are more inclined to share an experience they have had with a business than they are to discuss sales or promotions that a firm is giving, according to the responses to the questions.

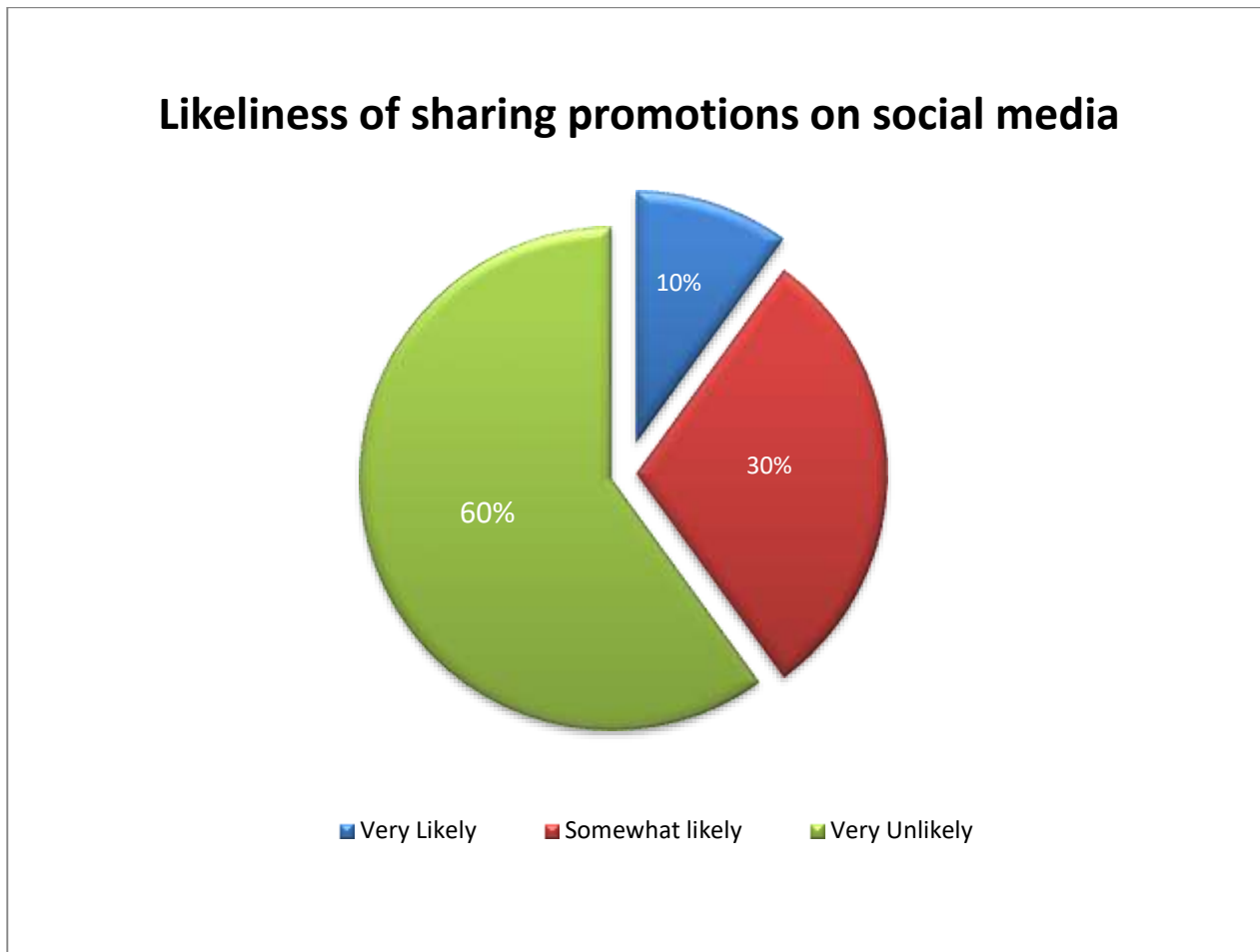


Figure 8: Likelihood of sharing promotions and offers on social media

Conclusion and Recommendations

The goal of this study was to see how social media affects customer attitudes and perceptions of a company that uses social media marketing. According to the data in this study, social media marketing increases brand recognition. As 97.5 percent of participants said they use

social media on a regular basis, and 70% said they use more than three platforms, social media may be utilized to contact clients. In addition, 75% of respondents say that social media is the most effective approach for a business to contact its target audience. The study's findings and recommendations for further research are discussed in the sections that follow.

Conclusions

The findings from a sample population's replies to a questionnaire reveal that firms with a social media presence have the potential to have a significant impact on revenue. While some participants may not actively engage in all of the corporate propaganda that is distributed to them via social media, the vast majorities of participants are aware of their efforts and take advantage of the chances that are available to them. For a variety of reasons, businesses should engage in social media marketing. Online visibility, brand recognition, customer-to-business communication, meaningful feedback, and the chance to see what customers, prospects, colleagues, and rivals are saying are just a few of the reasons. According to the conclusions of this study, social media not only allows businesses to communicate directly with customers, but it also rewards them with client loyalty. It may be stated that social media can assist firms in maintaining ties with potential clients and guiding them towards successful endeavors.

To summaries, today's business is transitioning from a transactional to a social connection. It's more important than ever for successful businesses to plan for successfully engaging their prospects and customers before, during, and after their purchase cycle, and that the foundation for this engagement is high-quality and relevant information. Information that is required by the target market at any time and in any location (24/7 and 365 days a year). The duty of the marketer is to provide this information in such a way that you are perceived favorably, that you establish a favorable brand and product reputation, and that you are chosen as their preferred brand. We could even be able to buy items and services through social media, given the current expansion and size of social networking. The medium is rapidly evolving and has enormous promise, but it is still in its infancy in India. As a result, now is the moment for businesses to develop and implement successful strategies in order to get a bigger proportion of business through this new medium and become the inventive firm of the future.

Recommendations

Several recommendations and ideas have resulted from the study's replies and assessment of the data collected. The following recommendations and suggestions may be made with the help of this study:

A business should focus on the content and timing of their social media posts; a business should use social media to monitor competition

- A business should focus on customer engagement and feedback to update business functions
- A business should use social media marketing to keep customers informed about sales, promotions, and new products and/or services
- A business should use social media marketing to keep customers informed about sales, promotions, and new products and/or services.
- Make changes to your website to go along with your social media strategy.
- Determine the actions you want your customers and prospects to do.
- Put your conversations into action.
- Provide the Information that your visitors are looking for.
- Keep your communication style constant.
- Distribute advertisements.
- Make use of your web properties to encourage users to do the activities you want.

By participating in the social media movement, businesses can communicate and engage with potential consumers all around the globe and make word-of-mouth promotion profitable. Social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram can be useful as they provide businesses with targeted exposure within their social network. The more social media exposure a business creates, the higher the potential of attracting more customers.

The goal of this research was to learn how consumers utilize social media as a communication medium and how businesses can use that knowledge to sell more effectively. The following are some suggestions for further research:

- Examine the specific impact of social media marketing on financial gains
- Look into specific businesses that are currently using social media marketing to promote their businesses and engage with their customers.

- Increase the size of the sample, including participants from diverse backgrounds, not just community college students.

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