

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

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Abstract: Social media marketing and its benefits, Social media marketing in India, Consumer perception on social media marketing and COVID-19s impact on marketing.

Keywords: Social media marketing, Marketing, Marketers, Consumers, COVID-19.

I. INTRODUCTION

Technology began to change very rapidly in the 20th Century. The first super computer was created in the 1940s, following which the scientists and engineers began to develop ways to create networks between those computers, and this led to the birth of the Internet and the growth of social media. Social Media are web-based online tools that enable people discover and learn new information, share ideas, interact with new people and organizations. It allows the exchange of user-generated content like data, pictures, and videos. Social media platforms may come in different forms such as blogs, business forums, podcasts, micro blogs, photo sharing, product/service review, weblogs etc.

The first recognizable social media site, Six Degrees, was created in 1997. It enabled users to upload a profile and make friends with other users. In 1999, the blogging sites became popular, creating a social media sensation that's still popular today. After the invention of blogging, social media began to explode in popularity. Sites like MySpace and LinkedIn gained prominence in the early 2000s, and sites like Photobucket and Flickr facilitated online photo sharing. YouTube came out in 2005, creating an entirely new way for people to communicate and share with each other across great distances.

Social media and social networking have a longer history than one might expect. In an increasing trend, companies are engaging in social networking to market their products and services. Many companies have Facebook pages and they work hard to put interesting contents on their pages in order to attract fans and generate consumers' "liking" their page. Companies also engage users with marketing within the social networking websites. When companies engage in social networking, consumers can more naturally interact with their products, which may increase loyalty and positive feelings and attitudes toward the product. In addition, social networking allows consumers to pass on information and comments about the products and companies, hence extending the company's reach exponentially. The aim of the present study is to understand the perception of consumers towards social media marketing.

2.Social media marketing:

Social media refers to the means of interactions among people in which they create, share, and/or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. Merriam-Webster defined "social media" as "forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and micro blogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content. Social media can be defined as "a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content". (Kaplan & Haenlein, 3 2010, P60). Social media marketing is a term used to describe online marketing (paid efforts) that focus on social networking sites. One of the major benefits of marketing on a social networking site (e.g. Facebook, Twitter) is that advertisers can take advantage of the user's demographic information and target their ads appropriately. Marketing is very important tool in promotion mix for all kind of organizations usually it refers to one-way communication in any mass media.

By 2025, the number of worldwide social media users is expected to reach about 5 billion people. With so many consumers using social media every day, this presents a great opportunity for the businesses who want to reach their online audience (Smith, K,2019). Source: Smith, K, 2019

Social Media Marketing can be defined as “an online Ad that incorporates user interactions that the consumer has agreed to display and be shared. The resulting Ad displays these interactions along with the user’s persons (picture and/or name) within the Ad content” (IAB, 2009, P4). The American Marketing Association defines it as “the placement of announcement and persuasive messages in time or space purchased in any of the mass media by business firms, non-profit organizations, government agencies, and individuals who seek to inform and/or persuade members of particular target market or audience about their products, services, organizations, or ideas”. However, with the development of the internet and online world especially social media environment, a lot of changes happened in marketing, in its capabilities and functions which require a new paradigm (L.Tuten, 2008, P2).

2.1.Benefits of Social Media Marketing

The benefits of using marketing through social media are:

- **Generate Leads-** The goal of all paid marketing should be to generate leads. Each social media post created should be connected to a landing page and the landing page should include a call to action. The link to the landing page that includes a call to action will maximize the effectiveness of the campaign. It'll also allow the seller to monitor the effectiveness of the campaign.
- **Increase the Visibility of the product-** Promoting posts on Facebook is a great way of increasing the visibility of the content. The post will appear nearer to the top and in more people's News Feeds than if it wasn't promoted.
- **Increase Brand Awareness Customer Loyalty –** When a Facebook page is created for the business and then promoted through Facebook marketing to accumulate more “likes”, there will be an increase in brand awareness.
- **Reach an Engaged Audience -** Social media users tend to be highly engaged. Because people visit social networking sites several times per day and spend a lot of time on them, ads on social networks are more likely to be seen, clicked and shared.
- **Target Specific Audiences-** Users on social media sites tend to divulge a lot of personal information in their profiles. Businesses can use that information to target users based on specific criteria, including their geographic location, personal interests, gender, and age. On Facebook, advertisers can even have their ads placed on pages that mention specific keywords.
- **Increase Brand Awareness Customer Loyalty-** The fan pages help to increase customer loyalty because they give the opportunity to interact directly with customers, which keeps the business at the forefront of their minds and makes the seller seem more approachable.

Best Social Networks for Ecommerce Marketing New social media networks come out every week, most of which will never gain any sort of traction. In 2020, there are 6 different social media channels which have proven to generate consistent ROI are:

1. Facebook.
2. Instagram.
3. Twitter.
4. Pinterest.
5. LinkedIn.
6. Snapchat.

2.2.Consumer perception on marketing in social media

Perception is defined as the process by which individuals select, organize and interpret stimuli into a meaningful and coherent picture of the world. As a consumer, perception becomes shaped by marketing, word of mouth, past experiences, social media, pricing, quality and customer service. Through these efforts, brands can redefine themselves as not just a product but also as a part of the consumer's lifestyle choices. Social media in recent times is playing a prominent role in impacting the sales, brand awareness and loyalty. In the decision-making process, the impact of social media remains significant in the stages involving information search, alternative evaluation and post purchase evaluation. Social media has complicated the decision-making process and extended the time taken by the consumers to buy the products.

2.3.Social media marketing in India:

India is the third largest growing online market after the USA and China (The Economic Times, 2012). According to emarketer.com (2013), 19.2 million Indian buyers were engaged in online buying in 2012 and this number has been predicted to

increase to 41.8 million by 2016. Within the next five years, the annual online sales in India can potentially reach \$15 billion (internetretailer.com, 2013). The recent statistics by internet and Mobile Association of India (IMAI, 2013) exemplifies the extensive reach of social media among the Indian internet user, and reports that nearly 62% of internet users engage in social media websites. India has the third largest number of Facebook users worldwide after the US and Brazil (Socialbakers.com, 2013). Apart from Facebook, Indian users are frequent other social media sites such as LinkedIn, YouTube, and Twitter. This phenomenal reach of social media in India has encouraged advertisers to view social media users as promising consumers.

3. COVID-19's impact on Social Media Marketing:

Social media marketers have needed to act fast to adapt to the impact of COVID-19.

Optimizing their (often reduced) budgets and pivoting to new content strategies to remain connected to their locked down customers.

3.1.Time on social media has increased

As lockdown restrictions left many of us seeking connection, we turned to our smart phones and social media. This increase clustered in certain areas, with a surge in Instagram Live content and TikTok downloads. According to this data, our usage is likely to continue to a similar degree, even post lockdown.

- Stat: Globally, mobile usage has increased an average of 1 hour per day during COVID-19. Source: Ericsson Mobility Report.
- Stat: Two-thirds of consumers who follow influencers say they're likely to continue using social media to the same extent once restrictions are lifted. Source: The Age of Influence. July 2020. GlobalWebIndex and Influencer.
- Stat: 10% of consumers who follow influencers in the U.S. have started using TikTok to follow influencers during the outbreak, rising to 17% in the UK. Source: The Age of Influence. July 2020. GlobalWebIndex and Influencer.

The opportunity for marketers: People are spending time on social media to be entertained and feel a sense of connection. Recognizing this and tapping into those motivations with your social content will add value to your customer's online experience and make them want to spend more time with it.

3.2.Ad engagement has increased

We've spent more time online speaking to friends, but we've also spent more time with influencer content and advertising. While some brands cancelled marketing campaigns at the start of lockdown, it gave those remaining fewer competitors. With fewer ads they were able to gain strong engagement levels.

- Stat: Mobile ad engagement has increased 15% during pandemic. Source: Mobile Marketer.
- Stat: Interactions with sponsored posts reached 57 million in July compared to March 2020, a rise of 5x. Source: Research by Shareablee.

The opportunity for marketers: Make the most of this boosted engagement by featuring a clear call to action on your sponsored posts and social ads. Also, leverage tools like Instagram's shoppable tags to convert engagers.

3.3.Online shopping is booming

As bricks and mortar stores were forced to shut and consumers limited their trips out of the house, shoppers moved their purchasing online.

- Stat: August retail sales were up 3.9% year-on-year, boosted by 42.4% rise in online non-food sales. Source: Econsultancy.
- Stat: E-commerce orders were up 108% year-on-year in February. Source: Quantum Metric.

- Stat: Australian ecommerce grew more than 80 per cent year on year (YOY) in the 8 weeks after the COVID-19 pandemic was declared by the World Health Organisation. Source: Australia Post 2020 eCommerce Industry Report
- Stat: In Indonesia in May, 55% of consumers said they were shopping online more. Source: Statista

The opportunity for marketers: With more customers adopting online shopping, friction is removed from their buying journey. An inspired scroller can see something they like in a sponsored post and be redirected to their e-commerce site in seconds. This gives social marketers an opportunity to drive higher conversions. Instagram's shoppable features take this a step further and allow social users to make purchases without even leaving the app.

3.4. Influencers form deeper connections

Social users have been spending more time with influencer content and finding value. While brands worked hard to empathise with their customers' pandemic realities, influencers were actually living it. In sharing their daily lives, their followers identified with their shared experience.

- Stat: 1 in 4 Gen Z say creators helped influence their plans after the outbreak. Source: The Age of Influence. July 2020. GlobalWebIndex and Influencer.
- Stat: 96% of consumers who follow influencers say they're engaging with creators more or to the same extent as before the outbreak. Source: The Age of Influence. July 2020. GlobalWebIndex and Influencer.
- Stat: Of US and UK consumers who follow social media influencers, 72% are spending more time on social since the outbreak, according to a May 2020 GlobalWebIndex and Influencer survey. And 64% of respondents are likely to continue using social media to the same extent once pandemic-related restrictions are lifted. Source: The Age of Influence. July 2020. GlobalWebIndex and Influencer.

The opportunity for marketers: Aligning with influencers is a great way for a brand to humanise itself. Authentic influencer content, particularly during the pandemic, resonated with audiences and through genuine partnerships, brands can recreate this connection.

4. CONCLUSION

Social media is one of the most cost-efficient digital marketing methods used to syndicate content and increase the visibility of business. Implementing a social media strategy will greatly increase the brand recognition as it will engage a broad audience of consumers. Increasing brand visibility is the basic goal of advertising, whether it is done through television commercials, print ads, social media or radio ads. There are so many people using social media on a daily basis, and hence these platforms are used as methods of increasing visibility.

Social media advertising also increases brand visibility among the growing number of young people who don't watch TV. Obviously, television advertising will be lost on them, which makes advertising through Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr and other social networks as important as ever. Many people first learn of a product or brand because it was mentioned on their Twitter feed or on their Facebook wall, and it is very possible that they wouldn't have learned of it otherwise. In this context, the present study is highly relevant. It has thrown light on the perception of the consumers towards advertising in social media platforms.

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