

INFLUENCE OF ADVERTISING AND SOCIAL MEDIA ON BUSINESS GROWTH AND MARKETING TRENDS IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Growing popularity of social media compelled the marketers to think about this media along with traditional functional areas of marketing. Social media is based primarily on the internet or cellular phone-based applications and tools to share information among people. The number of social media user's is more than the population of some of the countries today. Impact of social media on marketing can be judged by comparing marketing before social media and marketing after the introduction of social media and the type of technologies used in social media. Until the late 1990's the only form of media known to businesses were television, newspapers and radio, however in the early 2000s, a revolution in media was witnessed and the world was introduced to Social Media. Social Media is a just like any other form of media is a tool used for communication but at the larger scale for social interaction using highly accessible and scalable communication techniques. Social media has a positive impact and a positive influence on the company as well as the customers. Social media is becoming an essential tool for marketers, which is at a very minimum investment. In today's scenario consumers judge a company based on their online presence, hence companies can innovate and simultaneously create a strong social presence by always catering to their customers' needs and concerns. Internationally, companies have adopted Social Media as an essential tool for their marketing campaign; however the same is not adapted in India to a large extent. What are the benefits of Social media? What are the examples of Social media? This study understands the benefits, impact and importance of Social Media on business performance and growth.

KEY WORDS: Social Media, influence, Brand awareness, Business performance and growth.

INTRODUCTION

Social media marketing is the use of social media platforms and websites to promote a product or service. Although the terms e-marketing and digital marketing are still dominant in academia, social media marketing is becoming more popular for both practitioners and researchers. Most social media platforms have built in data analytics tools, which enable companies to track the progress, success, and engagement of ad campaigns. Companies address a range of stakeholders through social media marketing, including current and potential customers, current and potential employees, journalists, bloggers, and the general public. On a strategic level, social media marketing includes the management of a marketing campaign, governance, setting the scope (e.g., more active or passive use) and the establishment of a firm's desired social media "culture" and "tone." When using social media marketing, firms can allow customers and Internet users to post user-generated content (e.g., online comments, product reviews, etc.), also known as "earned media," rather than use marketer-prepared advertising copy.

"You can buy attention (advertising). You can beg for attention from the media (PR). You can bug people one at a time to get attention (sales). Or you can earn attention by creating something interesting and valuable and then publishing it online for free." – David Meerman Scott, Marketing strategist/Author the New Rules of Marketing and PR. Until the late 1990's the only form of media known to businesses were television, newspapers and radio, however in the early 2000s, a revolution in media was witnessed and the world was introduced to Social Media. Social Media is a just like any other form of media is a tool used for communication but at the larger scale for social interaction using highly accessible and scalable communication techniques. According to Ann Handley – MarketingProfs, Author with C.C. Chapman of Content Rules, "Social media is an ever-growing and evolving collection of online tools and toys, platforms and applications that enable all of us to interact with and share information. Increasingly, it's both the connective tissue and neural net of the Web".

MAJOR BENEFITS OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR BUSINESSES

The following are the major benefits of social media for business:

- 1. Improved customer insights:** The business gets a better understanding of their customers and they can always share their insights as they are aware that the company is listening to them. Social media allows them to see what potential customer's opinions are and network with them as well.
- 2. Better customer service:** Social media allows businesses to respond to their grievances, questions and concerns almost instantaneously. Customers want to be assured that, if they have a problem they can receive help at the earliest. According to Forbes, 71% of consumers who receive a quick response on social media say they are more likely to recommend that brand to other people.

3. Cost efficient: When a business is running on a fixed marketing budget, social media is the most cost-efficient way to market and promote the business. Websites like Facebook, twitter, pint rest, etc., allow any business to share their content for no cost at all. Hence Social media is an affordable advertising platform.

4. Connectivity: The business will always be connecting to the customers in terms of changing preferences, lifestyles and resources and adapt to the changing interest of the consumers. Companies will also be able to cater to the dynamic interests and innovate on their marketing campaign accordingly

5. Establishing Brand Awareness: Through social media it is possible to increase the brand awareness among customers as businesses can create awareness by building company image.

6. Sales: Through the increased exposure on social media, it drives traffic into the company. This in turn converts the potential customers to actual customers. Therefore, increasing sales. According to Brian Solis some prominent examples of Social Media are

- Facebook is a popular free social networking website that allows registered users to create profiles, upload photos and video, send messages and keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues. According to statistics from the Nielsen Group, Internet users within the United States spend more time on Facebook than any other website.
- Twitter is a free micro blogging service that allows registered members to broadcast short posts called tweets. Twitter members can broadcast tweets and follow other users' tweets by using multiple platforms and devices.
- Google+ (pronounced Google plus) is Google's social networking project, designed to replicate the way people interact offline more closely than is the case in other social networking services. The project's slogan is "Real-life sharing rethought for the web."
- Wikipedia is a free, open content online encyclopaedia created through the collaborative effort of a community of users known as Wikipedians. Anyone registered on the site can create an article for publication; registration is not required to edit articles. Wikipedia was founded in January of 2001.
- LinkedIn is a social networking site designed specifically for the business community. The goal of the site is to allow registered members to establish and document networks of people they know and trust professionally.
- Reddit is a social news website and forum where stories are socially curated and promoted by site members. The site is composed of hundreds of sub-communities, known as "subreddits." Each subreddit has a specific topic such as technology, politics or music. Reddit site members, also known as, "redditors," submit content, which is then voted upon by other members. The goal is to send well-regarded stories to the top of the site's main thread page.

• Pinterest is a social curation website for sharing and categorizing images found online. Pinterest requires brief descriptions but the main focus of the site is visual. Clicking on an image will take you to the original source, so, for example, if you click on a picture of a pair of shoes, you might be taken to a site where you can purchase them. An image of blueberry pancakes might take you to the recipe; a picture of a whimsical birdhouse might take you to the instructions.

Social media is bringing a big cultural change as businesses are using social media in innovation, customers service, brand building, information technology, etc.. With the help of Social media businesses can attract more prospects and innovate their business plan and accordingly witness profits and sales like never before.

SOCIAL MEDIA'S IMPORTANCE

According to University of Communications and Marketing, South Florida, Social media is an internet-based form of communication. Social media platforms allow users to have conversations, share information and create web content. There are many forms of social media, including blogs, micro-blogs, wikis, social networking sites, photo-sharing sites, instant messaging, video-sharing sites, podcasts, widgets, virtual worlds, and more. Social media is used all around the world to make connections and share information. On a personal front social Media allows users to communicate with friends and family, on a professional front, social media lets users communicate with professionals from the business. Social media also lets users cater to consumer needs and feedback at the earliest. Social media has opened avenues for marketers that did not exist before or were too complicated. Social media is a powerful tool at the fingertips of marketers and they can share a piece of content with the world in seconds. Social media is very important for the business as it helps Showcase the company's brand and create a brand image by handling a strong social media presence. By regularly updating details about the company and its social happenings, prospective customers are sublimely on the lookout for the company. Social media leads to massive exposure due to its worldwide access, sharing capabilities, and huge amount of daily users. It delivers instant information in the digital marketplace, thus giving businesses the ability to advertise their products, going beyond distance. Statistics have proven that interacting in social media networks even 2-3 times per week can significantly increase online presence in both the traditional and digital market space, while companies are building new relationships outside the four walls of your office. Social media channels are proactive tools when it comes to increasing company trustworthiness. By closely communicating with customers on a social media level, the company become a trusted source of information which makes it a great asset when creating company awareness and brand credibility. Social media can be a great source of customer service, transforming negative customer's experience into a positive outcome for your business. Social media allows company to get personalize their products to their customers. With increased response to customer feedback prospective customers are more likely to become potential customers as the company is available to cater and respond to their specific requirements and expectations.

IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON BUSINESS GROWTH AND PERFORMANCE

With Social media growing at an astronomical rate, there is a tremendous impact on business and the business of marketing. Social media helps develop business tactics. Famous websites like facebook, twitter, linkedin and pinetrest show an opportunity for business to grab the attention of the customers and simultaneously build brand image. These social networks allow business to use and show many tactics and create a brand profiles like fan pages, contests, sweepstakes, etc. Social media also shows what are the likes and preferences of our friends and family and accordingly decide on the product based on their peers preference over glossy magazine advertisement. When there is an unhappy customer he blogs and writes about it on the many social networking sites, with a strong online presence, any company can tackle that situation by using their own unique way of innovation the product and its customer service. When creating a social media marketing strategy, it is worth thinking very carefully about who is being targeted. There will be people within the social networks who may not necessarily be customers, but who nevertheless can have a massive impact on the marketing efforts.

Social networking websites

Social networking websites allow individuals, businesses and other organizations to interact with one another and build relationships and communities online. When companies join these social channels, consumers can interact with them directly. That interaction can be more personal to users than traditional methods of outbound marketing and advertising. Social networking sites act as word of mouth or more precisely, e-word of mouth. The Internet's ability to reach billions across the globe has given an online word of mouth a powerful voice and far reach. The ability to rapidly change buying patterns and product or service acquisition and activity to a growing number of consumers is defined as an influence network. Social networking sites and blogs allow followers to "retreat" or "repost" comments made by others about a product being promoted, which occurs quite frequently on some social media sites. By repeating the message, the user's connections can see the message, therefore reaching more people. Because the information about the product is being put out there and is getting repeated, more traffic is brought to the product/company. Social networking websites are based on building virtual communities that allow consumers to express their needs, wants and values, online. Social media marketing then connects these consumers and audiences to businesses that share the same needs, wants, and values. Through social networking sites, companies can keep in touch with individual followers. This personal interaction can instill a feeling of loyalty into followers and potential customers. Also, by choosing whom to follow on these sites, products can reach a very narrow target audience. Social networking sites also include much information about what products and services prospective clients might be interested in. Through the use of new semantic analysis technologies, marketers can detect buying signals, such as content shared by people and questions posted online. An understanding of buying signals can help sales people target relevant prospects, and marketers run micro-targeted campaigns.

Mobile phones

More than three billion people in the world are active on the Internet. Over the years, the Internet has continually gained more and more users, jumping from 738 million in 2000 all the way to 3.2 billion in 2015. Roughly 81% of the current population in the United States has some type of social media profile that they engage with frequently. Mobile phone usage is beneficial for social media marketing because mobile phones have social networking capabilities, allowing individuals immediate web browsing and access to social networking sites. Mobile phones have grown at a rapid rate, fundamentally altering the path-to-purchase process by allowing consumers to easily obtain pricing and product information in real time and allowing companies to constantly remind and update their followers. Many companies are now putting QR (Quick Response) codes along with products for individuals to access the company website or online services with their smart phones. Retailers use QR codes to facilitate consumer interaction with brands by linking the code to brand websites, promotions, product information, or any other mobile-enabled content. Also, Real-time bidding use in the mobile advertising industry is high and rising because of its value for on-the-go web browsing. In 2012, Nexage, a provider of real-time bidding in mobile advertising, reported a 37% increase in revenue each month. Adfonic, another mobile advertisement publishing platform, reported an increase of 22 billion ad requests that same year. Mobile devices have become increasingly popular, where 5.7 billion people are using them worldwide, and this has played a role in the way consumers interact with media and has many further implications for TV ratings, advertising, mobile commerce and more. Mobile media consumption such as mobile audio streaming or mobile video are on the rise – in the United States, more than 100 million users are projected to access online video content via mobile device. Mobile video revenue consists of pay-per-view downloads, advertising, and subscriptions. As of 2013, worldwide mobile phone Internet user penetration was 73.4%. In 2017, figures suggest that more than 90% of Internet users will access online content through their phones.

IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING TRENDS ON DIGITAL MARKETING

The growth of social media marketing platforms has become a major part of building social signals that are very important in any SEO digital marketing campaign. Perhaps you are unaware that the emergence of different social media channels offers internet marketers like you wider marketing opportunities in building brand visibility over the web. How your website ranks on the search engine can make a big impact regarding your customer and lead acquisition and conversion rate for your site. Social media marketing integrated with search engine optimization strategies is effective in building an organic for website traffic. There are different social media marketing trends that will affect the way digital marketers will undertake their search engine optimization campaign to boost their lead generation process and website conversion rates this year. From the insights of digital marketing experts, here are some of the social media marketing trends that can impact the growth and success of your digital marketing and search engine optimization campaigns. Are you ready to embrace these trends into integrating them to your internet marketing structures.

Online marketers now view the value of social media marketing for their business from a different perspective. There is a significant explosion in the number of consumers who are using socials as a means of finding products and services that they need. According to prestigious social consumer statistics:

- Social networking is used by about 76% of businesses to achieve their marketing objectives.
- Business retailers experience about 133% increase in revenues after marketing their business in the mobile market that promotes social media marketing value for their business.
- 40% of online shoppers from the US use the Smartphone for in-store shopping.
- About 71% of the consumers respond according to the feedback and recommendation of social users regarding a particular brand.
- Consumer reviews are regarded by shoppers as trustworthy than the marketing promotion coming directly from the brand site.
- The majority of successful brands have a social media page to widen their marketing coverage of making their brand more accessible among social media users.

BENEFITS OF USING SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS IN PROMOTING A BRAND INCLUDE

- 1. Growing social signals** Social signals can significantly boost your search engine optimization efforts. The more people in the social media community share, like, recommend and talk about your business the more the search engine finds your website relevant thereby increasing the chance of your web pages to acquire a higher position to the search engine results page.
- 2. Promote company branding and awareness** Social media users can always recommend to their social media circles significant quality of your brand. This can be a good marketing boost to your brand image and in growing the number of people becoming more interested in your brand reputation and to become a follower of your brand.
- 3. Word of mouth advertising is powerful** Word of mouth advertising tends to have a higher trust rating from the consumers than the product descriptions that your company promotes from your site. Whenever your web page gains more likes and shares from the social media community, the wider your audience reach and influence becomes to your target customers. Integrating social media into your digital marketing campaign is thus crucial to attaining your marketing goals. From becoming a mere luxurious means of marketing business online, social media marketing becomes an important pillar in SEO with the need of integrating it to digital marketing in an effort of making small to medium businesses at par and competitive with their competitors.

SOCIAL MEDIA AS AN ESSENTIAL MARKETING TOOL

Traditional forms of marketing included print media, social media and broadcast media. This had its own drawbacks. Television advertisements, leaflets, direct mail and email no longer seem to have the same impact as they used to. One of the major drawbacks was that they had the same advertisement strategy or the same advertisement repeated over many years. Businesses using social media as a means to market their product allow innovation and creativity. Social media allows the company to have a strong online presence by always reaching out to their customers and also providing great service. Companies can adopt fresh new approach to all their product innovation and increase awareness among their target audience. Social tools can also help to strengthen brand perception by communicating core values to a wider audience. This, in turn, opens up the opportunity to start conversations, grow business partnerships and expand the online community to win new followers and potential customers. Social media demands innovation and creativity in every press release the company has to make. Companies also need to keep up with other companies to fight competition and cater to the demanding customers' needs and wants. In order to stand out from competition, companies must listen and learn from their customers to map their needs against what else is going on in the social media domain. Efforts must be put to go beyond what is already existing and convert their corporate objectives in to existing and original social media activities. Dynamically using social media is one of the easiest ways to reach a large customer base and get the company or brand name in the heads of existing or potential customers. Not only does an already established network help to create new contacts, it will also help to deepen connections that have been formed. Even though this is very familiar to traditional marketing techniques, social media has given it a new twist. Companies that fail to adapt to a new more connected and interactive market, will unavoidably fall behind. When Media Group conducted a study on marketing efforts for one of their long term clients, they disclosed their marketing expenditure details over 5 years.

CONCLUSION

Many companies are using Social media as well as traditional form of media to market their products and to have a better connect with their customers. Via Social Media, one is able to reach out to more customers and cater to their specific needs better. Companies can also build their brand image via social media. Social media is an effective tool in doing business today and brings out innovative strategies out of companies that used to be very monotonous. The above study also determines that social media has a positive impact on business and its growth and performance. Companies that are at maturity stage in the product lifecycle can adopt social media to extend their business survival, if they fail to do so, they are undoubtedly going downhill in the coming years.

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