



Social Media Usage by Dietitians and Nutritionists- A Qualitative Study

Ms. Nikita Singla

Research Scholar, Jagan Institute of Management Studies, Sector-5, Rohini,

Dr. Amisha Gupta

Associate Professor, Jagan Institute of Management Studies, Sector-5, Rohini, Delhi.

Dr. Bhavneet Kaur

Professor, Jagan Institute of Management Studies, Sector-5, Rohini, Delhi.

Abstract

Purpose- Social media has become one of the most cost-effective mediums for advertising and promotion of business. Dietitians and Nutritionists (D&N) are also using social media platforms for reaching out to people across globe. The purpose of this research is to identify the usage of social media platforms by Dietitians and Nutritionists and to study the dimensions of social media marketing activities.

Design/methodology/approach- Qualitative research was carried out by conducting in-depth interviews of Dietitians and Nutritionists who have presence on social media platforms and are based in Delhi/NCR.

Findings- This study describes the 5 dimensions of social media activities (Motive, Media, Management, Merits and Metrics) that plays an important role in driving business promotion. Study also identified that Instagram is the most used social media platform by D&N for connecting with the audience, growing business and getting recognition.

Keywords social media, dietitians, nutritionist, social media platforms, qualitative research, wellness industry, social media platforms

Paper type Research Paper

INTRODUCTION

AS per the report published by Business Insider in 2023, more than half of India's internet users—420 million—use social media. Of these, 67% (281 million) follow at least one of the influencers. Furthermore, 28%, or 118 million, have used items or services advertised in the influencer advertisements. From the perspective of brands, influencers are agents of discovery driven and brand centric commerce, driving the purchase decision of customers.

According to GWI's most recent research, over six out of ten working-age internet users (57.8 percent) still utilise online resources to get information, ahead of- Staying in contact with friends and family (53.7 percent), Staying informed about news and current affairs (50.9 percent); and Watching videos (49.7%). Within the field of digital advertising, social media platforms appear to have benefited the most from the transition to digital. According to Statista, social media's proportion of worldwide digital ad expenditure has increased from around 25% in 2019 to more than a third in 2022.

2023 Forbes Advisor projected, that 4.9 billion individuals utilise social media globally. The total number of social media users worldwide has reached a new high of 4.9 billion. Furthermore, this figure is predicted to increase to almost 5.85 billion users by 2027. These users aren't tethered to particular platform, either. The average user now distributes their digital presence over six to seven platforms each month, emphasising the need of a multi-platform strategy to social media marketing.

As per the Global Overview Report, the use of social media has tremendously increased to more than 50% with 227 million new users within the last year. People spend average of 2h 29m daily on social media. It is used as a marketing tool to increase brand awareness, engage customers, maintain relationships, provide customer support, and attract traffic to their stores. Businesses can save a lot of money by using free or low-cost social media sites in comparison to costly traditional media. Every day, many business owners take advantage of this low-cost tool for business promotion; however, one cannot effectively use all social media platforms; thus, the right platform and content must be chosen.²

An article by CSG mentioned that social media marketing is one of the most cost-effective distribution channels for healthcare information in the wellness business, as well as a critical chance to acquire real-time research and insights while also supporting patients and the public through an accessible and timely platform.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study aims to provide a greater knowledge of social media usage from the viewpoint of D&N. The primary objective of the study is to define the dimensions of social media marketing activities and to identify the major social media platforms used by the D&N.

The study will offer fresh perspectives to social media marketers and D&N about how to use this low-cost marketing tool effectively. The research will thus contribute in two ways:

By examining the factors that were not taken into account in earlier research efforts, it is possible to:

- (1) learn more about social media usage in the promotion of the services given by D&N
- (2) identify the social media platforms that are used by D&N.

So, this study focuses on how D&N carry out their role on social media platforms, using the dimensions of social media marketing activities, i.e., Media, Motive, Management, Merits and Metrics.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Today, everything is a part of social media. Digital tools that enable users to create as well as seek information online are collectively referred to as social media. Currently, a lot of people use digital media to produce content in various fields. (Kaplan & Haenlein).2010.

Promoting the business through social media is an art, which requires creativity. It is not necessary to be on every channel. To get maximum benefits from social media, it is important to choose the best platform which is more likely to reach and engage the target audience. (Kaur & Kumar). 2020.

Irshad & et al. 2012, conducted a study in Delhi-NCR to examine the effectiveness of social media as a marketing tool and suggested some strategies to bridge the gap between consumer expectations from social media and its performance to improve the effectiveness of the platform. Results were analyzed using regression analysis. This study revealed that most of the people spend more than 3 hours a day using social media and consider social media before starting the decision-making process. Therefore, companies should talk more about their brands and products on social media in order to persuade people in making their purchase decision.

In their research, Lagrosen & Grunden. 2014, investigated the use of social media marketing in the wellness industry, specifically marketing of spa hotels in Sweden. The data was analyzed using constant comparative technique from the grounded theory approach. This technique emerged four main categories that depicted the dimensions of social media marketing activities, i.e - Media, Management, Content and Effects. The main limitation of this study is that it has been carried out in one industry, i.e wellness industry and in only one country. The possibility of generalizing the findings to other context can be the scope of future research.

Another research was conducted by Balakrishnan et al., 2014, conducted on “The Impact of Social Media Marketing Medium towards Purchase Intention and Brand Loyalty among Generation Y”. The study found that the online marketing communications, specifically EWOM (Electronic Word-of-mouth), online communities and online advertisement are effective in promoting brand loyalty and product purchase intention through company website and social media platforms. This study was conducted in context of Malaysia and data was collected through questionnaire from undergraduate students of Malaysian University of Gen Y, of which data of 200 respondents was interpreted through mean and regression analysis.

Dumus and et al., 2018 tried to map and summarize the evidence about the users, uses and effects of social media in dietetic practice. The study revealed that social media platforms were used to deliver content as part of large multiple component interventions for weight management. Also, among intervention studies using a control group with no exposition to social media, they identified positive, neutral and mixed effects of social media for outcomes related to users, health behavior and status.

A study was conducted by Hagg and et al. 2018, to identify, explore and summarize the current state of the literature on the use of social media for health in low- and middle-income countries. The study concluded that “Misinformation or poorly communicated information, can contribute to negative health behaviors and adverse health outcomes among consumers.” Social media users should supply accurate and understandable information. Governments, health care professionals, and academics might contribute to reduce the impact of disinformation by promoting reliable social media sites and educating people on how to use social media appropriately.

Images related to online-diet that are shared by dietitians on Instagram are diverse. A study by Eroglu and Buyuktuncer, 2018 in Turkey, analyzed what images and content do professional dietitians share via

Instagram. The data was analyzed using SPSS tool. The study revealed that the dietitians published most content in food category, followed by information category and least in physical activity category.

Arora and et al.,2018 discovered a mechanism for measuring influencer index across different social media platforms. The study tried to measure social media influencer index across popular social media platforms including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Results were analyzed using multiple regression modelling techniques. The study found that engagement, outreach, sentiment and growth play a key role in determining the social influencers index.

Furthermore, Wiedmann & Mettenheim, 2020 conducted a study in Germany to explore whether the requirements of influencer's attractiveness, expertise and trustworthiness are relevant for online influencer campaigns. The main focus of this study was on entry level luxury fashion brand- BOSS. ANOVA test was used to analyze the data. The study found that main requirement for influencers is trustworthiness and attractiveness. Whereas the requirement for expertise seems almost negligible.

Audrezeta and et al., 2020, pointed out as to how to maintain best partnership among SMI and marketers to achieve win-win relationships while protecting SMI's authenticity. Qualitative research was carried out. The study found two authenticity management strategies- passionate and transparent authenticity. Further these strategies were articulated to propose a four-path framework that provide the first conceptualization of how SMIs can manage authenticity for themselves to resolve the tensions created by brand encroachment into their content.

McFarlane & Samsioe, 2020, conducted a non-participative and observational qualitative netnographic study with the fashion influencers whose purpose was to show clothes, write about styles or use hashtags about a specific type of fashion of style appearance. The study found that SMI refrain from directly posting about the fashion brands that they endorse. Personality attracts followers to politically charged posts which directly impact upon their social and cultural contexts where influencers are active.

A case study was analyzed as to how social media is used and its impact on intrinsic motivation conducted in Poland by Krol and Zdonek. 2020. They analyzed the results using a questionnaire which were circulated amongst full time and part time students of one of the largest universities in Poland. The study revealed that- While certain "motivational aspects" of social media usage were mentioned by the respondents, the majority of them were typified by a lack of engagement and a passive approach towards different social media platforms. The responders' number of active publications was low. Although the respondents were not motivated to share the content, they did expect it to be valuable.

A literature review was conducted by Chu and et al, 2020, to study "The role of social media advertising in hospitality, tourism and travel". After reviewing the literature, three major topic areas were identified: - use of social media from consumer's perspective, use of social media from organization's perspective and effects of social media. Although a few prior papers have provided a literature review of social media in tourism and hospitality, no review-based papers have ever examined social media as an advertising vehicle in the context of HTT.

Taillon and et al.,2020, tried to understand the relationship between social media influencers and their followers in south and west USA using questionnaire as a part of qualitative analysis. The study found that closeness serves as an important role in attitude towards the influencer and purchase intentions and it should be carefully considered by brand managers and social media influencers.

After reviewing the existing literature, McNamra and et al., in 2020 tried to understand the antecedents and consequences of social selling. Authors proposed a social selling framework that included personal branding, information exchange, networking and social listening to define and outline the construct.

As discussed earlier by Lagrosen, 2014, different dimensions of social media activities. Similar study was conducted by Kaur & Kumar, 2020, to identify the prominent social media platforms in Indian beauty and wellness industry and to establish dimensions of social media activities. The research was conducted in Ludhiana and Punjab which included 7 owners and managers of beauty and wellness centers. The research was analyzed using in-depth interviews. The study established 5 dimensions of social media activities that play a major role in promotion, i.e., Motive, Media, Merits, Management and Metrics. Also Facebook and Instagram are prominent social media platforms for this industry, followed by Snapchat, YouTube and LinkedIn.

They also conducted a study in 2020 in Brazil & Portugal using the past literature to understand how D&N are using social media to communicate with their audiences. The study found that the participants judge social media as a useful tool to gather professional information and that health professionals are sceptical about the potential of social media for efficient communication with patients. This is due to privacy issues, the difficulty for conveying an individualized message and the judgment that their patients are not used to social media or technology. Also, Twitter is not being presented as a tool that is often used for nutrition content in Brazil and Portugal.

M.Cook and et al., in 2021, conducted a study to examine how social media influencers can help brands build favorable brand attitudes to improve product acceptance and downstream business performance. The study was conducted on U.S. based Instagram app users. The results were analyzed using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The study revealed that SMIs exhibiting high levels of expertise and trustworthiness are seen to have high- perceived source credibility and vice-versa.

Another study by Sbardelotto and et al., 2021, revealed that Instagram as the social network was most often used by professionals and the roles played by social networks in the professional context of dietitians were attracting more clients and keeping in touch with them. The data was collected from Dietitians who were registered on the Federal Council of dietitians in Brazil. They conducted the quantitative cross-sectional study.

Saboia and et al., 2021, conducted a study in Portugal to understand how registered Dietitians & Nutritionists (RDNs) carry out their role on social media to promote health issues, to become known and to communicate with their followers and patients. The research was carried out by circulating an online questionnaire amongst registered RDNs in the Portuguese Council of Nutritionists and found that Instagram is the most used digital tool and the most accessed one on a daily basis. Also the most common behavior among RDNs are reading, commenting, sharing and writing.

Katool in Mississippi, 2022, examined if college students can distinguish between nutrition misinformation or factual nutrition information when presented on social media. The results were analyzed using SPSS software. The study revealed that most of the participants lack correct nutrition information. It also illustrates that participants absorb all the information given from social media as true, which means that participants might not realize the importance of evidence-based information or the source of information. It indicates that participants consider social media as a reliable source of nutrition information.

A study by Jasin, 2022, concluded that social media marketing has a positive and significant effect on healthcare industry sales performance and digital marketing has a positive and significant effect on healthcare industry sales performance. Adding to it, one consumer gets an increase in orders from consumers after using social media.

A qualitative study was conducted by MNutr&Diet and et al., 2022, to understand how dietitians can use social media to positively influence women aged 18-35 years and to explore as to which nutrition and health-related content they prefer to view and why. Qualitative research was conducted and the study

revealed 3 themes- first theme reflected participants preference for credible social media content delivered by people who are genuine. Second theme captured characteristics of delivering the high quality and health related nutrition content which is engaging and easy to understand. And the third theme highlighted that selling on social media can dilute authenticity, diminishes trust and turns participants away from the social media content

As per the previous study by Eroglu and Buyuktuncer, 2018, the most posted content by dietitian is related to food. To further elaborate the research, Kabata and et al., in 2022 conducted a study to determine whether social media profiles can be reliable source of information on Nutrition and Dietetics or not. This quantitative cross-sectional study was analyzed using SPSS software. The study revealed that posts related to cooking recipes were the most commented ones, followed by motivational quotes and last fitness related. The study also revealed that Instagram is the most frequently used social network by professionals. Also, dietitians use social networks to attract clients/patients and to facilitate frequent contact with them.

After doing extensive research, we observed that Dietitians and Nutritionists are using social media to attract new clients and facilitate frequent contact with them. Studies by Sbardelotto (2021) & Kabata (2022) concluded that health professionals are using social media to attract more clients and keeping in touch with them. Another study by Kaur & Kumar (2020) revealed that D&N are using social media networks to communicate with the audience. This study was backed by research done by Jasin (2022), in which the author concluded that both social media marketing and digital marketing has positive and significant effect on healthcare industry sales performance.

Previous studies by Eroglu (2018), Kaur & Kumar (2020), Shardelotto (2021), Saboia(2021) and Kabata (2022) revealed that Instagram is the most frequently used social media network by D&N.

A study by Lagrosen (2014) explored 4 dimensions of social media marketing activities in the wellness industry that are- Media, Management, Content and Effects. The study has shown how hotels organized their activities, what media they use, what type of content they post and how they analyze the effects of these activities

Further, these dimensions were studied by Kaur & Kumar (2020) in the context of Indian beauty and wellness industry and gave 5M's of social media marketing activities- Motives, Media, Management, Merits and Metrics. Nowadays, social media influencers are taking advantage of this inexpensive tool to promote their business and brand. But one cannot use all the social media platforms effectively, thus, there is a need to choose the right platform for the right audience and for the right purpose. It is very much necessary to explore the interactive possibilities of social media in the context of dietitians and how they use social media to interact with the audience.

After reviewing literature, we observed that Instagram is the most used platform in different industries like- fashion, wellness and health and in different countries. We have also seen that D&N are also using social media platforms to promote themselves and disseminate their knowledge. But still, as per our knowledge, no study has clearly stated as to how D&N- "who are the true source of information" are using social media platforms to promote healthy lifestyle and communicate with people in Delhi-NCR.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

Choosing the right research approach relies on the environment and type of the investigation. Qualitative research is ideal for gaining a detailed insight of a specialised sector or small group of people, particularly in exploratory studies. This research followed an exploratory approach by collecting data through one-on-

one interviews from D&N. The interviews were conducted over Zoom video call and the responses were recorded.

Sample Size and Technique

For in-depth qualitative interviews, a sample size of one is sufficient to provide valuable insights. In this study, a total of 15 interviews were conducted with D&N who have presence over any social media platform (Instagram., Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, etc.). The sample size is appropriate for qualitative research and consistent with past studies. Convenience sampling was used to choose participants, prioritising accessibility and availability. Participants interview undertook on a pre-determined and mutually agreed-upon day. The interviews were semi-structured with the motive of deriving and exploring the themes of interest.

Ethical Protocol and Governance

The study received full ethical approval from the Jagan Institute of Management Studies (JIMS) ethics committee. Every participant gave their consent. The research brief advised them that they might voluntarily withdraw from the study at any moment. The interviewees granted permission for their interviews to be recorded. All data was kept on a password-protected (encrypted) computer that hosted the interviews.

Data Collection

In qualitative research, convenience sampling is commonly used to identify and select information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest. Only Dietitians and Nutritionists from Delhi/NCR were involved in this study. Every subject was either Nutritionist or Dietitian with a presence on any one social media platform (e.g.- Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, snapchat etc). The researchers connected one-to-one with the participants via- phone call, messages, WhatsApp and email, asking for volunteers to share their thoughts and opinions on use of social media platforms. In total, 15 dietitians and nutritionists were interviewed due to time constraints, accessibility and availability. The study was to gain a deep understanding of how dietitians and nutritionists are using their social media platforms, so demographic data was not reported.

Data Analysis

The research provided here used a semi-structured interview guide to examine experience, indicating a phenomenological approach. Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is based on phenomenology, focusing on individuals' lived experiences and their interpretations. It involved-full data immersion by reading and listening the transcript and recording again and again in order to develop new insights out of the data collected.

Stages of research findings-

1. Generating codes at Individual Level
2. Generating key words from quotes
3. Identification of common themes from all respondents
4. Mapping of 5 dimensions of social media marketing activities
 - Management (how activities are organised and managed)
 - Media (choice of social media platform)
 - Motive (purpose of using social media)
 - Merits (benefits of using social media)
 - Metrics (measuring and analysing the outcome of social media activities)

FINDINGS

Social media as a marketing tool is very much in trend for creating brand, publicity, engaging with people, building relations and to increase the knowledge. Its an inexpensive tool as compared to expensive traditional media. People are using this tool for carrying out businesses online and for promoting themselves. But one cannot use all the social media platforms at once. So, it is necessary to choose the right social media platform and get accessed to right type of content. This study describes the 5 dimensions (Motives, Media, Management, Merits & Metrics) of performing social media activities by D&N.

1. Motives

This dimension of social media marketing discovers the main purpose of using social media for business by D&N. Nowadays, D&N have moved from just physical presence to social media presence with some individual motive and social media has all the power. Everyone has the tendency of giving and devoting time to social media, so D&N are also using social media to educate people and helping them in lifestyle modification. As per the qualitative research conducted, 8 out of 15 respondents from the interview mentioned that the main motive of using social media platform is to reach masses, to improve their visibility and to connect with people across globe. D&N are also motivating people to follow a healthy lifestyle by spreading knowledge in the form of the content posted by them and by continuous engagement. Respondent-4 mentioned that:

“My purpose is not only to market myself but also, me as a dietitian will always prefer that our client should be motivated constantly or be on a path of lifestyle modification, rather than just following a piece of paper advice which we are giving them as the diet plan. So we want that they should you know, inculcate good lifestyle habits in that. So how I can provide them that kind of information. So, these tools like Facebook, Instagram -are the only convenient and easiest way.”

As per the previous study by Kaur & Kumar, 2020, in Indian beauty and wellness industry, it was found that the main motive of respondents using social media was to advertise their work and eventually grow in the industry. They also highlighted that social media is an economical tool for promotion of the business.

In contrast with the previous study, this study also pointed out that- social media platforms are inexpensive and can be accessed anywhere anytime, as compared to clinical presence. Clinical presence involves high cost, management and time. People can reach to any D&N across globe just by sitting at one place and using any social media tool like Instagram, Facebook, YouTube etc. D&N are also using these platforms to market themselves and get business in the form of clients. Social media has become an interesting and most important tool in getting recognition in the health industry by showcasing the knowledge and skills and thereby building a brand of themselves.

2. Media

This dimension of social media marketing highlights the choice of social media platform for marketing communication. Social media platform serves as a medium to connect and interact with the audience across globe. There are several platforms available for personal and professional use. As per our study, all the 15 respondents prefer to use Instagram as the platform for their businesses. They also have presence over all the other social media platforms like- Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Google my Business, Podcast and LinkedIn. All the D&N prefer using Instagram because it is trending,

Previous study by Lagrosen & Gruden, 2014, found that Facebook was the most common medium used by professionals in wellness industry. Whereas, another study by Kaur and Kumar, 2020, highlighted that both Facebook and Instagram were the leading social media platforms in the Indian beauty and wellness industry. In the similar way, this study found that all the D&N prefer Instagram, over all the other social media platforms available.

Respondent-15 stresses on-

“Why Instagram, why not Facebook, because Facebook people are using for years now, right, now whatever you will post on Instagram will automatically be posted on Facebook, so one thing I am using Instagram, so I am using Instagram and Facebook both simultaneously. And I have seen people these days, they are more engaged in reels, making reels on Instagram. So that was the platform which was giving me more engagement and more cliental. I started up with Facebook, but the kind of traffic which I was getting was not it should be. So when I started marketing on Instagram, I was getting better engagement, better traffic. So, I started using Instagram more.”

15 out of 5 respondents prefer Facebook and YouTube as secondary options for connecting with the audience. As per the respondents, Facebook is for Gen X and is old, whereas Instagram is for Gen Z and its usage is also very easy. Respondent-2 highlighted-

“I prefer using Instagram because I thought that most of the youngsters these days are over Instagram only. And I wanted to reach out more people through Instagram. Facebook, I didn't give a thought because I am more comfortable with Instagram because I know Instagram as in how to post, how to set up your grid and that is more like pleasing and appealing to me over Facebook. I would prefer Instagram any day. But now I feel like I should have joined both of them together, because most of the ladies or Gen X are not over Instagram that much. So, I couldn't reach out to those people quiet often.”

One respondent also highlighted that Instagram was easy to handle when it was just about posting photographs and some short videos. But now, Instagramming is also becoming tougher day by day as it involves creating reels, boosting, collaborating and using different features. So, people are also switching from Instagram to YouTube for delivering the exact knowledge in the form of long informational videos to the people who are looking for the same content. Respondent- 11 highlighted:

“Now its more of Instagram because, Instagram has made it so interesting, post Covid, I think there are lot of people on Instagram, so yes , use of Instagram is more than Facebook now. But there was a time when Facebook was more. I think on Instagram, we have audience who are sitting for an entertainment purpose also. They want entertainment. Facebook was when I was using Facebook, I saw that there were lot of genuine clients, who will come to the page and would want to see that this is the service provider and like I am into medical field- nutrition and mind therapy and mental health. So I may not have posts which are very fancy in terms of- I might not be dressed that well. So Instagram is more about fashion I guess. More fashion bloggers and all that but yes we have a lot of people who are engaged there, so we have to bring in our presence on Instagram. “

Respondent- 12 highlighted that you cannot connect with the audience on YouTube.

“I feel like I am not able to connect with people whom I don't know and who don't know me on Instagram. But on YouTube, it goes a little too wide and reaching out to bigger audience maybe I am not able to connect with them and maybe they will not be able to connect with me.”

There are pros and cons of using every platform, thus, choosing the right social media platform is very crucial for attracting the right audience and disseminating the knowledge to the people. Connecting with the appropriate audience at last gives the results in the form of clientage and recognition.

3. Management

After knowing the motive of being on any social media platform and then choosing the right platform to deliver the content, the next important decision is the management. Since, all the respondents choose Instagram as the platform for their business and recognition, so this dimension highlights the management of social media profile on Instagram. Everyone finds it very easy to post pictures, content, videos, reels etc, but managing the comments, queries and suggestions from audience is a task.

11 out of 15 respondents are using experts or professionals to manage their social media profiles. The main reason for hiring a professional is their lack of knowledge of using the tools of Instagram and the time

management. D&N are occupied in managing their clients offline and online, so they don't have enough time to dedicate to the platform.

According to one of the respondents, D&N are experts in giving nutritional and health advices to people. But they lack the marketing of their knowledge, so they hire experts to market their content and information in the right and presentable way. They want that people should access the right knowledge in an appropriate and convenient manner. Most of the D&N have hired professional to get help in graphics, editing and creating presentable content for themselves, but they don't prefer giving access to expert. They give their content and information to the team of professionals and they deliver the content in the form of reels, posts, posters, igtv etc. Respondent-11 mentioned: -

"I may not have hired somebody to multiply things to get more regenerations. I have hired people for graphic designing, since I am not very good with posters, so there I am just putting it for more clerical purpose. Whatever content I tell, they will put it up In a poster nicely so that I becomes flashy and there are health tips that people get and they will put it on right platform so that it gets maximum visibility and that tips could be helpful for many people. It was like portraying your work and sharing help."

Respondent- 12 also mentioned: -

"I have got a very close friend who is assisting me professionally. But I have hired her to assist me. Also, she is technologically well versed. She is 18 years younger to me and she is more savvy with the tech part and editing the videos, using Canva and using all these kinds of apps to make content for me. But not a professionalist yet. I prepare the content; she makes it presentable. So, we both sit and discuss as to what should go and how but the content is mine and she does that art work – creative and uploading it and all that."

As per a study by Kaur & Kumar, 2020, in Indian beauty and wellness industry, people like to manage their social media profiles themselves as they feel it is easy to use. But simultaneously, some people do take help as and when required, to promote their page, for creative content and also due to lack of time.

On the contrary, another study by MNutr and et al, 2022, highlighted that woman aged 18-35 years, gets influenced by dietitians whose content is 55% entertaining, 53% authentic and creative and 51% informational. These findings are congruent with our study as D&N are hiring professionals to make their content look entertaining, creative and presentable in order to cater to the needs of the audience on the Instagram platform.

In contrast with the findings, Lagrosen & Gruden, 2014, pointed out the need for using pictures in the posts in order to attract attention and express feelings.

So, creating feelings and impressions in the posts, is seen more than delivering factual information, as it helps in connecting with the audience in real-time and grabbing the attention of the people.

4. Merits

This dimension of social media marketing activity depicts the benefits of using social media. As the use of Internet is growing, the usage of social media as a market place is also increasing. Social media platforms are becoming a market place to increase the brand awareness and increase the business. Through social media, people can directly connect with the brands and people across globe. 12 out of 15 respondents mentioned that the main benefit of using Instagram as the social media platforms is that, it is cost effective. Also, D&N can connect with people anywhere anytime overseas, without involving the infrastructure cost, manpower cost etc. Social media has made everything in automation mode.

Respondent-2 compared traditional media with social media and said-

"We can reach out to so many people within seconds and we can reach out millions of people not only the people living in Delhi or Mumbai, I can reach out to people living in India and overseas as well. So, I got my overseas clients as well also through Instagram, which I don't think I will be able to get through some advertisement in

newspaper or pamphlet something like that. So, that's why social media is better. Also, creative content obviously, because I can make really creative content over Instagram like recipes, videos or some tips and tricks through reels that are really trending these days. But through traditional media I don't think I can creatively convey my message to audience."

Respondent- 6 agreed with respondent-2 and said-

"I think one is the reach, there is so much more reach than me just sitting in the office and being like- I can only do one-on-one. So now the reach is infinite. You can also do so many different types of projects and you know, work with different brands and stuff like that. So its like, opportunities are infinite when it comes to social media and that steps me different from my clinic or office and doing on-on-one or meeting people one-on-one."

On the contrary, respondent-4 pointed out the importance of both traditional and social media platforms usage and mentioned-

"The only thing is that when a client refers you to someone, then the other person don't know my name, the only thing that will come to their mind is Google my name. so, it will convince them more. They will see my presence on social media and they will see like- through websites, my social media profile, that I have transformed so many lives and I have a presence on social media, I am writing articles for various newspapers or something. They will get to know the knowledge that I am giving to people."

Some respondents also mentioned that the usage of social media platform is fun and easy. People can deliver their content in many ways- entertaining, fun, knowledgeable, factual etc.

During one-on-one interaction, participants pointed out certain demerits of using social media. Respondent- 4 talked about the authenticity of the platform. She mentioned that the information provided by people are sometimes not authentic and not well researched, which hampers the health and lifestyle of the people who are following. This thought was backed by a recent study by MNutr&Diet and et al, in 2020, that people use health content as a vehicle to sell products. Selling on social media may dilute authenticity of the content, diminish trust and turns participants away from social media. People want to earn and, in this context, they display sponsored ads, affiliate with discount codes and links, which at last make people question their content credibility.

However, audience has become smart in recognising the authenticity of the content by reviewing the posts and through comments. In spite of some demerits of the platform, still people want to use social media because of its merits.

5. Metrics

After analysing the motive behind using social media, type of social media platform, its management and benefits, now, this dimension of social media marketing activity reflects the ways and methods of analysing and choosing Instagram as the platform. Measuring and analysing the outcomes of Instagram as the platform is very crucial for D&N to see how much a platform is contributing in fulfilling their motive.

Although the respondents have not really measured technically, 9 out of 15 respondents have an impression that social media presence and engagement has contributed in the form of increase in cliental and leads. Lot of people have enrolled in the dietic program through Instagram.

Respondents- 2 analysed how she measures the effect of social media-

"I get results in the form of clients, so that is the thing that I believe that Instagram is working well for me, because whenever I post some new recipe or some new content, whenever I am consistent, I get more request from people like- what are your charges, and they ask me more about my diet plans and what all I do. And that eventually converts into them being my client of mine."

Previous study by Lagrosen & Gruden, 2014, mentioned that social media platform has contributed to attract more customers in wellness industry, particularly the Swedish spa hotel. On the similar graphs, this

study also pointed out that D&N are analysing the platform by analysing the number of cliental and genuine queries generating from Instagram.

Another study by Kaur and Kumar, 2020, it was seen that most of people in the Indian beauty and wellness industry use “Insights” and “Analytics” tool for measuring the effectiveness of Instagram. Whereas, in our study, only 2 respondents are aware about this feature on Instagram. 5 participants gauge the effectiveness of Instagram by looking at the increasing engagement and followers. No doubt, that D&N are getting lot of clients and queries from the platform, but they lack the marketing tool knowledge. So, measuring the effectiveness of the platform varied from industry to industry and people to people.

CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this study was to identify the roles played by D&N on social media platforms using the 5 dimensions of social media marketing activities. In this research a total of 15 in-depth interviews were conducted with D&N who have presence over social media platforms. It was clearly observed that D&N are also using social media for various purposes. The study evaluated the social media presence of D&N over 5 parameters, i.e. Motive, Media, Management, Merits and Metrics. These parameters are explained briefly below-

Motives- D&N are using social media platforms to reach the large audience, to connect with people across globe, motivate people to adapt healthy lifestyle and for spreading their knowledge.

Media- Surprisingly all the D&N have moved from various social media platforms to Instagram. Nowadays all the social media platforms are connected with one another, like you post something on Instagram, then it automatically connects the content to Facebook. Most of the respondents have moved from traditional means of promotion to social media due to its easy access and low cost.

Management- D&N prefer to hire a professional or a team of professionals to look into their account from content creation, graphic designing to posting the content in the right time to maximise its reach and visibility.

Merits- social media is really helping D&N as its inexpensive, reaches the masses in no time and due to its convenience of handling and operating anytime anywhere.

Metrics- D&N are not well aware of measuring the effectiveness of the platform using the “Insight” feature. The participants measure the results in the form of queries, comments, leads and enrolments.

To consolidate, D&N are using social media platforms for making a brand out of themselves and to spread their knowledge about the right dietic practises. Every business must identify and consider these 5M’s of social media marketing activities in order to evaluate all the parameters for better understanding regarding the purpose of social media.

This study will be helpful to all the social media marketers and D&N to identify the usage of this low-cost tool. However, proper training should be provided to them in order to use if effectively.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has some limitations. This study is exploratory in nature, which aims to explore the usage of social media by D&N. Therefore, the findings cannot be quantified and generalised and this is can become the scope for the future research. Respondents gave new insights and highlighted various problems associated with the platform, so studying that perspective could be another area of research. Also, research was just confined to Dietitians and Nutritionists, future research could address different industries and counties. The findings from this research can be useful for business owners and health professionals to use social media effectively.

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