



SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING – A SOCIAL MEDIA USER’S PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Social media has become an integral part of communication process in any human’s life. The momentum gained by social media over a short period is attributed to the instant communication of messages to its users irrespective of geographical distances. Currently, it not only facilitates communication but also marketing and social commerce. In today’s world, businesses are driven and dominated by a wide variety of choices of the consumers and their demands. Social media is channelized in a big way by the business houses to market their products for the ever changing demands of the consumers. Due to the instant and wide reach social media enjoys, it becomes easy for the business houses to connect with the consumers across the globe at an economical price. This indicates the transition of social media from being predominantly a communication platform to a marketing platform for the business houses.

Key Words: Social media marketing, Purchase decision, User’s perspective.

Introduction

Social media is the new phenomenon which attracts the attention of users and businesses where they connect with each other. These days, businesses believe in this instantaneous mode of communication and marketing to its consumers. This change in the communication by business houses have also contributed to the changed expectations of the consumer. This change is reflected by the opinion expressed by Judy Lannon (1994): “Consumers have changed from being deferential and generalized to personal and selective”. Earlier mass media advertising dominated marketing communications for decades; however, the nineties have seen companies place a greater emphasis on alternative marketing communication mediums (Lannon, 1996). Nowadays, the consumers are techno savvy and accept any technology advances readily and easily. This paradigm shift in the attitude of the consumers’ has resulted in the confidence of the business houses to succeed in their marketing campaigns through social media. Social media is no more restricted in providing a platform for the individuals to connect touch with their family and friends but also to learn about their favourite companies and the products they sell. Marketers use this means as another way to reach consumers and provide a novel way to shop for them. This has been clearly stated by Shankar et.al. (2011,30) “Technology related developments such as the rise of powerful search engines, advanced mobile devices and interfaces, peer-to-peer communication vehicles, and online social networks have extended marketers’ ability to reach shoppers through new touch points”.

Review of Literature

Social media network are applications that allow users to build personal web sites accessible to other users for exchange of personal content and communication (Palmer and Lewis 2009). The purpose of social networks is primarily for communication and exchange of ideas of interest among peer groups or communities. Chi (2011, 46) defines social media marketing as a “connection between brands and consumers, [while] offering a personal channel and currency for user centred networking and social interaction.” The tools and approaches for communicating with customers have changed greatly with the emergence of social media; therefore, businesses must learn how to use social media in a way that is consistent with their business plan (Mangold and Faulds 2009). According to Gummesson (2002) however, it is through frequent communication initiated by the marketer on the interactive social networks that a long term friendship can be developed and maintained between the business and the customer (Gummesson 2002: 10).

Objectives of the Study

- To identify the most effective mode of social media marketing
- To study the impact of social media marketing on the purchase decision of the consumer

Research Methodology

Questionnaires were distributed to collect primary data. Secondary data was collected from books and online journals. This research is restricted only to the social media users of Chennai city. Random sampling technique was used for this study. 135 questionnaires were distributed. Snow ball sampling techniques were carried out for getting references. 115 questionnaires were returned, of which 103 completed questionnaires was taken up for further analysis. SPSS 15.0 was used for data analysis. Analysis was done by Paired t-test, Correlation, Friedman’s Rank test, Descriptive Statistics and Percentage analysis.



**Analysis
Profile of the Respondents**

Table No.1 - Background Information of the Respondents

No.	Item		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1.	Age	18 – 21 yrs	25	24.3	24.3	24.3
		22 – 25 yrs	29	28.2	28.2	52.4
		26 – 29 yrs	18	17.5	17.5	69.9
		30 yrs & above	31	30.1	30.1	100.0
		Total	103	100.0	100.0	
2.	Gender	Male	56	54.4	54.4	54.4
		Female	47	45.6	45.6	100.0
		Total	103	100.0	100.0	
3.	Educational Qualification	School Level	12	11.7	11.7	11.7
		UG Level	20	19.4	19.4	31.1
		PG Level	25	24.3	24.3	55.3
		Professional	46	44.7	44.7	100.0
		Total	103	100.0	100.0	
4.	Member of Social Media	Yes	102	99.0	99.0	99.0
		No	1	1.0	1.0	100.0
		Total	103	100.0	100.0	
5.	Hours of usage of Social media per day	No Usage	1	1.0	1.0	1.0
		Less than 1 hr	21	20.4	20.4	21.4
		1 hr – 2 hrs	25	24.3	24.3	45.6
		2 hrs – 3 hrs	20	19.4	19.4	65.0
		3 hrs and above	36	35.0	35.0	100.0
		Total	103	100.0	100.0	
6.	Awareness Of Social media marketing	Yes	100	97.1	97.1	97.1
		No	3	2.9	2.9	100.0
		Total	103	100.0	100.0	

Table No.1 reveals the background of the respondents (belonging to different age groups, educational qualifications, membership in social media, hours of usage per day) and their awareness about social media marketing. The maximum usage of social media by majority of respondents is for 3 hours and above. It is evident that 97% of respondents indicating a high majority are familiar with social media marketing.

Most Preferred Social Media

Table No.2 - Descriptive Statistics of the most preferred Social Media based on ranking

Social Media	Mean Value	Ranks	Standard Deviation
Facebook	.97	1	.169
Whats App	.97	1	.169
Hike	.70	3	.461
Instagram	.36	4	.482
Twitter	.21	5	.412
Viber	.17	6	.382
LinkedIn	.06	7	.235

The above table discloses that the first rank is shared between Facebook and Whats app with the same mean values which indicate high popularity. Next in ranks are Hike, Instagram, Twitter, Viber and LinkedIn respectively.



The Most Preferred Mode of Social Media Marketing

Table No.3 Friedman Rank Test-Different Modes of Social Media Marketing Strategies

Social Media Marketing Strategies	Mean Rank	Rank
Pop – Up Windows	5.21	6
Sponsored Ads	4.14	3
Side Bar Advertisements	4.78	4
Related Pages	3.97	1
Offers and Promotions	4.13	2
Banners/ Labels	5.00	5
Personalised Inbox Messages	5.61	7
Sponsored Links	5.68	8
Advertising in Communities either by tagging/ publishing contents	6.48	9

Friedman Rank test reveals that “Related Pages” is the most preferred mode of social media marketing followed by Offers and Promotions, Sponsored Ads, Side Bar Advertisements, Banners/ Labels, Pop – Up Windows, Personalised Inbox Messages, Sponsored Links, Advertising in communities either by tagging/ publishing contents.

Social Media Marketing Strategies in Different Mediums of Social Media

Table No.4 - Frequency distribution of the user’s opinion of different Modes of Social Media marketing strategies employed in different mediums of social media which influences the user to visit the corresponding site

Social Media Marketing	Instagram	Facebook	Twitter	LinkedIn	Viber
Pop-Up Window	11	64	3	0	0
Side Bar	3	67	5	0	2
Offers and Promotions	5	62	6	2	2
Sponsored Ads	13	64	6	1	2
Related Pages	9	73	9	1	1
Banners/ Labels	11	60	5	2	3
Personalised Inbox Messages	11	60	5	0	1
Advertising in communities either by tagging/ publishing contents	8	65	4	1	1
Sponsored Links	8	66	2	3	1

The above table discloses that a majority of respondents have expressed their opinion that the different modes of social media marketing is most effective in Facebook followed by Instagram, Twitter, Viber and LinkedIn. In Facebook, **Related pages** is ranked first followed by Side Bar, Sponsored Links, Advertising in communities either by tagging/ publishing contents, Pop-Up Window, Sponsored Ads, Personalized Inbox Messages, Banners/ Labels, indicating that “Related pages” is the most attractive mode of marketing.

Visiting the Site and Purchase Decision

Hypotheses

H_0 : There is no relationship between visiting the sites on getting attracted to the marketing strategies employed by the business and its influence on the purchase of a product by the consumer

H_1 : There is a relationship between visiting the sites on getting attracted to the marketing strategies employed by the business and its influence on the purchase of a product by the consumer

Table No.5 - T-test Results – Paired Sample Statistics

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1 Marketing Strategies Kindle the interest to visit the site	.72	103	.452	.045
Marketing strategies influenced the purchase	.64	103	.482	.048



Table No.6 - Paired Sample Tests

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 Marketing Strategies Kindle the interest to visit the site - Marketing strategies influenced the purchase	0.78	.555	.055	-.031	.186	1.421	102	.158

The above tables disclose the results of paired t-test to compare the mean ratings between the two variables namely, marketing strategies kindle the interest of the user to visit the corresponding site and the marketing strategies influence the purchase of the consumer. The paired t-tests value was not significant at the .05 critical alpha level, $t(102) = 1.421, p=.158$. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted and concluded that there is no relationship between visiting the sites on getting attracted to the marketing strategies employed by the business and its influence on the purchase of a product by the consumer. It is evident that visiting the sites on getting attracted towards the advertisements does not necessarily result in the purchase of a product by the consumer.

Influence of Social Media Marketing On the Purchase Decision of the Consumer

Hypotheses

H_0 : There is no relationship between the marketing strategies employed by the business and its influence on the purchase of a product by the consumer

H_1 : There is a relationship between the marketing strategies employed by the business and its influence on the purchase of a product by the consumer

Table No. 7 – Correlation Analysis

	Marketing strategies employed by business	Marketing strategies influences the purchase decision
Marketing strategies employed by business Pearson Correlation	1	.242*
Sig. (2-tailed)		.014
N	103	103
Marketing strategies influenced the purchase decision& resulted in purchase Pearson Correlation	.242*	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.014	
N	103	103

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The Correlation between marketing strategies employed by the business and its influence on the purchase of a product was analysed. The r value of .242 confirms the alternate hypothesis that there is a relationship between the marketing strategies employed by the business and its influence on the purchase of a product by the consumer. Thus, it is evident that the attractive the marketing strategy of a business results in a confirmed purchase.

Findings

From the survey results, data analysis and interpretation it is clear that the different modes of social media marketing influence the purchase decision of a consumer. Descriptive Statistics results shows “Facebook” and “Whats App” are the most popular mediums of social media. Friedman rank test clearly indicate that “Related pages” mode of marketing is the most preferred mode of marketing. The frequency distribution reveals that Facebook is the only medium of social media which is popular for all the modes of social media marketing. The paired t-test results indicate that there is no relationship between visiting the sites on getting attracted to the marketing strategies employed by the business and its influence on the purchase of a product by the consumer. The correlation analysis reveals that there is relationship between relationship between the marketing strategies employed by the business and its influence on the purchase of a product by the consumer.



Conclusion

According to Chi (2011) users perceive advertising differently depending on the social network, which suggests user motivations for online social networking may play a vital role in defining consumer's responses to social media marketing. From this study it can be concluded that consumers businesses are transformed from transactional relationship to social relationship. Consumers do expect the business to cater to their needs in providing them a variety of options by keeping track of their browsing interest which is clearly proved with "related pages" becoming the most preferred mode. It is imperative on business houses to plan for successfully engaging their prospects and customers before, during and after their purchase cycle with high-quality and relevant information. This act of the business houses will definitely benefit the business to have increased sales, goodwill and its popularity increases in manifold. This medium of marketing through social media has a huge potential for the businesses in India as it is still considered to be at its infant stage.

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