

THE AFFILIATION BETWEEN SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

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Abstract:

Social media marketing strategies must be put into action in order to take advantage of the numerous chances that come with this rising popularity, as social media usage patterns have been seen to increase steadily over the previous few years. The study aims to determine the influence of many predictors that can regulate customer behaviour in order to identify the behaviour of social media marketing, particularly Facebook and Twitter. The information satisfaction, vividness, and entertaining content are some of these predictors or variables. The report indicates a wide range of opportunities for social media marketers and advises them to avoid posting merely casual and uninspiring material and to make their social media updates as exciting, colourful, and amusing as possible.

Keywords: *luxury brands, social media marketing, brand equity, online community, brand experience*

INTRODUCTION

A study that focuses on how social media significantly influences how customers make purchasing decisions. The internet has played a vital role in modern life as a specialised tool. People from all around the world connect with people and organisations online. Through online social networking sites, people have a lot of connections, and as a result, many people suck up data. This information becomes a source of influence on consumers and their purchase behaviour. People have started using online networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn from all around the world to share their experiences. As customers, people exchange reviews of products, information about services, advice on nutrition or wellbeing, warnings about products, instructions on how to use particular products, and much more.

New methods of looking for and acquiring information about the wide range of goods and services on the market have emerged as a result of the social media revolution. It has made it possible for customers to communicate with one another about brands and interact with them rapidly (Powerset al., 2012). Strangers are increasingly dominating consumer opinions on goods and services in online forums, which then affect opinions in physical settings (Smith, 2009). Social media has given customers more power because marketers have little control over the topics, timing, or volume of consumer dialogues online (Mangold and Faulds, 2009)

Marketers regularly monitor customer social media usage, but little is known about how it affects their purchasing behaviour. Many studies focus on customer behaviour in the context of online buying, but often neglect to take into account how the internet affects the various stages of consumers' decision-making (Darley et al., 2010). This study examines how consumers' decision-making for complex transactions is affected by the availability and abundance of these new information sources.

Due to its simplicity and adaptability, the traditional EBM model (Engel et al., 1990) is used to analyse the customers' decision-making process. Five stages make up the model: need identification, information search, alternative evaluation, buy decision, and post-purchase evaluation. The study aims to determine the model's applicability in the context of social media usage. Globally, businesses are spending a lot of money on social media marketing to promote their goods and services, build brand loyalty, expand into new areas, and grow their clientele. (Ziyadin et al., 2020). It is also one of the low-cost or affordable strategies for advertising a company's goods in a digitalized way within the context of the digital environment. (Saravanakumar and SuganthaLakshmi., 2012) Additionally, it has given consumers more power by enabling them to produce content, work with brands, and influence the opinions of others in their social networks. (Li, 2020; et al.)

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Despite the fact that social media marketing research has been conducted for more than a decade, the nature of this digital platform means that it is always changing in response to technological advancements. One of the most in-demand skills in today's world, it seems, is social media proficiency. As a result, it is critical to investigate its impact on a customer's perceptions and attitudes, which influence their purchasing decision and post-purchase behaviour.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Social media usage is widespread in the twenty-first century Internet based messaging have begun to have an impact on a variety of customer decisions buying behaviour appraisal brand marketing etc Facebook and Twitter like social media platforms are starting to have a significant impact on academic publications as well as corporate practises Numerous academic research papers have examined the function of social media in the corporate world over the past few years Twitter's involvement in a range of marketing domains such as helping to brand and promote businesses has been examined Greer and Ferguson 2001 Companies today need to concentrate on improving their understanding of their clients in order to boost their profitability Karimi 2015 According to Grant 2007 traditional distribution methods have suffered as a result of consumers turning to internet shopping due to the convenience of finding information about goods and services Businesses employ a customer centric strategy to build social networks and communicate with all of their target demographics Marketing is increasingly based on interactions departing from the conventional method Numerous research have found analysed and supported the reasons why people join social networks It has been seen that customers use social media to seek out information ask for assistance develop their abilities and gain knowledge about a certain good or service Members identify with the brand symbols and meaning and they also want to share their passion and derive satisfaction from being a part of the community Zaglia 2013 Shao 2009 Social media may now give several people with differing viewpoints additional and extensive information about any product and brand

History and classification of social media

The phrase "social media" became well-known after social networking websites like Myspace and Facebook were established in 2003 and 2004, respectively. Around this time, the phrase "Web 2.0" was also coined to characterise a new way of using the internet as a platform where content is continuously modified by many users in a participatory and collaborative manner rather than being created and published by a single user (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Wikis, interactive blogs, and collaborative projects introduced by Web 2.0 made it easier to build user networks and for users to share ideas, information, and knowledge (Constantinides, 2014).

User-created, publicly accessible media content is referred to as user-generated content (UGC) (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010)

Awareness of brand and e-WOM

Over the past several years, there has been a noticeable growth in the number of people using the Internet and social media. The consumer digital culture, responses to digital advertising, the influence of social media on consumer behaviour, mobile settings, and online rumours are the five components that need to be comprehended (WOM). Because social media is a part of consumers' digital environment and culture,

we can relate to its beneficial effects on people who are driven to share content with their audiences. One of the best strategies used by marketers to promote their products and draw in a huge audience is social media marketing.

The best strategies for marketers to promote their products and draw in a big audience. It aids in boosting brand recognition and enhancing a company's reputation. Additionally, due to the mobile nature of the digital environment, internet buying has increased. Online word-of-mouth is also closely related to customer attitudes and preferences. 2019 (Ziyadin et al.)

A quantitative study conducted in 2019 to assess the influence of social media on consumer behaviour by Voramontri and Klieb came to the conclusion that social media is crucial for gathering preliminary information and evaluating alternatives, which later encourages consumers to make a final purchase decision and conduct a post-purchase evaluation.

Word of mouth- electronically through social media

The internet has revitalised the idea of word-of-mouth (WOM), which was first established in the 1950s. WOM is defined by Arndt (1967) as "person-to-person communication between a receiver and a communicator regarding a brand, product, or service that the recipient views as non-commercial."

According to Kimmel and Kitchen (2014), word-of-mouth (WOM) influences all stages of consumer decision-making, from product awareness to selection and post-purchase evaluation. It shapes attitudes, perceptions, and expectations of brands, products, and services. The increased interconnectedness of people on social media has given WOM additional relevance nowadays (Kimmel and Kitchen, 2014). Online or electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) is a type of WOM where users of the internet rate and review a variety of goods and services on review websites (Bronner and Hoog, 2010). It is described as "any favourable or negative words made about a product or firm by prospective, present, or past customers, which are made available to numerous individuals and institutions via the Internet" (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Electronic WOM can be spread in a variety of ways, such as through social media platforms or the comments sections on e-commerce websites; nevertheless, company-led marketing communications are rarely the source of the information shared. Most people believe that content created by internet users, who are also customers, is free from commercial influences (Bronner and Hoog, 2010). Due to their trust, customers turn to forums, blogs, and other unbiased social media platforms to obtain information before making purchases (Powers et al., 2012).

Differences in how people make purchases.

Kotler and Armstrong (2014) divided consumer involvement into two categories: high and low, and major and minimal brand changes. Here is a summary of the four categories of purchase behaviour they identified.

Table: 1 Types of Purchase

| <i>Purchase behaviour</i> | <i>Characteristics</i> | <i>Examples</i> |
|---------------------------|---|------------------------------|
| Complex buying | High consumer involvement Significant brand differences Expensive Infrequent High risk | Car Laptop |
| Dissonance-reducing | High consumer involvement Few brand differences Expensive Infrequent High risk Price sensitive | Carpet Furniture |
| Habitual buying | Low customer involvement Little brand difference Frequent or repeat purchases | Household goods Groceries |
| Variety-seeking buying | Low customer involvement Significant brand differences Brand switching for variety | Cookies Restaurant |

Source: Kotler and Armstrong (2014)

Due to the high level of risk involved in complex purchases, product evaluation and information gathering are given more weight. It is distinct from dissonance-reducing behaviour, which is also high risk, in that there are significant brand differences and the consumer would go through all stages of the decision process. As a result, this study focuses on complex purchasing situations where the influence of social media is expected to be most visible.

OBJECTIVES

1. To carry out a descriptive study to comprehend how social media marketing affects consumer decision-making.
2. To evaluate the tools that marketers are currently using for social media marketing.
3. To determine the benefits and difficulties that businesses have while marketing their goods or services on various social media platforms.
4. To offer ideas or suggestions, if any.
5. To determine the Future Scope.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current research project employs secondary analysis to gain a thorough understanding of the topic. Most of the data was obtained from online journals and published papers, blogs, online reports, books, and articles on the same subject. This study investigates the significance of social media marketing by highlighting the various marketing strategies used by businesses to maintain their competitive advantage. It emphasises its influence on consumers brand perception and purchasing intentions, as well as the challenges that marketers face when offering their products or services in the dynamic social media environment. The study enabled us to make recommendations and draw conclusions in this research area.



TOOLS FOR SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING:

Blogs

Blogs are posts with short content that a company integrates with various social media platforms. The content is created specifically to attract the target audience for the product or brand. It enables the company to have a conversation with potential customers about its product or brand, who may respond positively or negatively by commenting on such posts. It assists the company in attracting new customers and connecting with other bloggers in the same industry or product category. (Zarrella, 2009)

Micro blogging

"Micro blogging is a type of blogging where the size of each post is restricted; for example, Twitter updates are limited to 140 characters." (2012) Saravanakumar and Sugantha Lakshmi A business can generate buzz for its goods or services and outperform the competition by boosting sales with a remarkably small time investment. It can be utilised to maintain contact with prospective, existing, and past clients.

Websites and social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, etc. give businesses plenty of possibilities to not only advertise and spread the word about their products and brands, but also to communicate with customers by allowing them to post comments and other content relating to the brand. To engage with clients, a business works with "influencers or micro celebrities." They provide "user created content" that is enjoyable, useful in fostering favourable word-of-mouth, and helps to establish brand reputation over time. 2020 (Li et al.).

Hashtag

The hashtag symbol is used by social media platforms to group together the thoughts, discussions, questions, and contests surrounding a certain product or brand. The customer can access the complete discourse by clicking the hashtag. 2009 (Zarrella).

Contest

Following a brand's page to enter a social media contest is one way to get followers, engage with customers, spread the word and start conversations, among other things. Other possibilities include voting for one of two goods from the same brand to win the offering, commenting, and sharing reviews about the product, loving social media postings from the brand and tagging your social circle, and enjoying social media posts of the brand. To broaden their appeal and seize their target consumers, the businesses may work with influencers or mini celebrities. (Sehl, 2019)

Content creators/communities

Like how it is done on social networking sites, users can share photographs, videos, and other multimedia content with a description on content communities like Youtube, Daily Motion, FlickrR, etc. to make the content available by other users who may like or remark on it. Businesses expand through advertising their goods and communicating with potential clients. Podcasts, or audio files that can broadcast information centred on a common theme to iPhone users, are the current invention in this industry. (Cross, 2014)

Immersive Media:

Recent technological advancements like virtual reality and augmented reality are changing the way that social media marketing tactics are used. With the aid of specialised equipment, virtual reality replaces the physical reality with a digitally simulated reality. (Owen, 2020)

On the other hand, augmented reality uses a smartphone as a headset and integrates a digital object into the user's real-world environment. While immersive technologies are still in their infancy, Augmented Reality, such as the use of filters on social media platforms like Instagram, Snap Chat, and Facebook, has changed the game for consumers. This technology is being quickly embraced by brands in order to produce original content, engage consumers, and entertain them. The 'Try On' function on AR shopping apps integrated with social media platforms could encourage users to make purchases. (Zote,2021). Customers may now take a 360-degree tour of a brand on social media thanks to 360-degree photos and videos, another technology. It is frequently used by the auto industry to display cars, by the real estate sector to display homes, and, most intriguingly, by the tourism industry to advertise a destination.

Chatbots

Chatbots are being introduced by social media sites like Facebook as a powerful marketing tool for businesses. An automated text-based conversation that interacts with clients and responds to their questions promotes business growth (Stelzner,2020). One of the best examples of a business using a Facebook Messenger chatbot to promote its brand is KIA Motors Europe. The chatbot's queries could lead to the clients winning an exclusive experience. The company's marketing strategy was successful because to this personalised experience. (Sehl, 2019).

Advantages for Marketers

1. According to the Kemp analysis, customers will be able to consume more mobile data thanks to the increase in internet speed or bandwidth offered by the 5G network by 2021, giving marketers a chance to reach a large audience.
2. Television, newspapers, radio, and magazines were once expensive marketing mediums. However, social media marketing is straightforward and affordable. Advertisers are not required to compensate distributors or publishers for the use of their space or for integrating their message. An audience will find an interesting piece of material on its own.(Saravanakumar and Sugantha Lakshmi,2012)
3. The incorporation of e-commerce websites into social media applications enables consumers to buy the goods and services being advertised as well as helps businesses improve sales. (Moustakas,2015)

4. Customers who are aware of, interested in, and satisfied with a specific brand, social media application, or marketing campaign can grow the clientele of the company by sharing and promoting their favourable opinions and experiences both online and offline. (Hoffman and Fodor,2010)
- 5.As part of the promotion mix, social media platforms offer "analytics and feedback for firms." This aids businesses in assessing consumer behaviour following purchases. (Moustakas,2015)
6. In contrast to traditional marketing, it offers two-way communication. It enables customers to gather data, share it, compare the good or service to those of other brands, or base their choice on the opinions of other customers. If a customer is happy, they may give it a positive label or give it a negative one on social media, which can help or hurt the company's reputation. (Moustakas,2015)
7. By posting relevant marketing information on social networking sites, it gives marketers the chance to strengthen their relationships with customers. The marketing manager can strengthen users' positive interactions with the brands they prefer and prevent them from buying competing products if they can encourage customers to identify with the company's brand culture. (Wibowo and colleagues 2020)
8. The four social media marketing strategies identified by Li et al. in 2020, namely, social commerce strategy targeted at advertising and sales, social content strategy focusing on branding and communication, social monitoring strategy aiming at service and product development, and social CRM strategy emphasising customer management and innovation, assist the company in long-term brand status development as well as the development of stronger client relationships.
9. Numerous studies have demonstrated that brand awareness and customer engagement aid to establish brand equity and have an impact on consumer behaviour. (Pütter,2017)

Challenges for marketeers

1. The brands are open to both favourable and negative reviews from consumers. To avoid a viral public reaction, it needs "predict consumer response and avoid unforeseen mistakes." (Saravanakumar and Sugantha Lakshmi,2012)
- 2.Even though social media data can be utilised for "consumer analysis, market research, and crowdsourcing of new ideas" (Li et al., 2020), user data privacy is still a major barrier to online purchases of goods and services that have been promoted on social media. Many advertisers rely on third-party cookies to target their audiences.
3. Customers may be discouraged from purchasing the marketer's goods or service due to a lack of personalization, an inability to try the good or service, and unsafe transactions. (Moustakas,2015). Wibowo et al., 2020 have also reaffirmed this in their study,It implies that social media marketing is unable to satisfy customers' experiences with taste, smell, and touch.
4. One of the difficulties that could prevent social media marketing techniques from being successful is creating appropriate marketing content. Companies can establish direct communication and positive relationships with their customers using the proper marketing content on social networking sites (SNS), which results in consumer behaviour that produces long-term success for the business.

5. Marketers should exercise caution when dealing with unsatisfied customers as their negative feedback, experiences, or attitudes about the company, product, or social media application could undermine the reputation and effectiveness of social media marketing efforts by propagating such experiences across other platforms, whether they be online or offline (Hoffman and Fodor, 2010).

6. It can be simple for marketers to establish a relationship with a customer on social media platforms but maintaining that relationship over the long term is more difficult because so many social media campaigns are being published online, giving consumers a variety of other products and brands to choose from. Therefore, it might be difficult for social media marketers to maintain a solid and lasting consumer relationship. (Kim and Ko.,2012)

7. Lack of measurement scales to assess the interconnectedness of brands, social media, individuals, and others; new emerging social media platforms; the dynamic nature of social media and the metrics associated with it; and social network analysis with factors such as electronic word of mouth, identification of influences, how messages and information influence customer behaviour, and so on are some unique challenges for both practitioners and academics. (Dwivedi and colleagues, 2020)

8. Most marketers calculate the return on investment in social media marketing by only taking into account their own marketing investments and calculating the returns in terms of customer response, but this only provides short-term results in terms of increased sales or reduced costs by a social media marketing campaign. They somehow ignore the bigger picture by avoiding customer response and customer investment, such as time spent on each website visit, frequency of visit, and level of participation in social media activities. (Hoffman and Fodor,2010) provide an example.

SUGGESTIONS

This paper is descriptive in nature and highlights the important role of social media for marketers and its impact on consumer behaviour. However, this field's quantitative investigations and conceptual model will determine the marketing consequences and provide marketing professionals with guidance. Also, it would be interesting to explore the marketing strategies that can be used on social media for different product categories which are offered by the marketers in the local and international markets. An appropriate metric scale to measure the outcome or the performance of Social Media Marketing Strategies is both a challenge as well as an area for future research. There is also a need to study an integrated framework for using social media with marketing strategies for the companies. It is also stressed that the pre-planning phase, implementation stage and review/control of the marketing strategies must not be overlooked by the academicians. Moreover, the consequences of such strategies should be analysed in "cross-culture research" as the social media has unified the globe. (Li et al., 2020).

FUTURE SCOPE

Future studies may examine the differences in customer behaviour, such as purchases, brand interactions, and recommendations, across different social media platforms. Analysing the effect of celebrities and influencers on customer behaviour and brand social media marketing tactics is equally crucial. Analysis of the mediating effects of age, gender, nationality, and interests on consumer levels of social media marketing is also necessary. In 2020, Dwivedi et al.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of several research studies highlights the importance of social media marketing, its function in boosting customers' purchase intentions, and its influence on their post-purchase conduct. By using social media marketing tactics, businesses not only expand their geographic reach and get ongoing consumer feedback and recommendations online, but they also meet unmet demands by putting the requirements of their target market at the forefront of their marketing strategy. Utilizing innovative online techniques and content draws clients to the items being sold while also giving the opportunity to network with international business groups. In the long term, it even results in the development of brand equity.

Given the wide range of goods and services that marketers provide, social media marketing is crucial for sustaining client loyalty and developing fruitful business partnerships. Despite having benefits for both marketers and consumers, social media marketing is not without its drawbacks. Limitations that must be addressed at the company's end through more committed efforts. Maintaining a long-term relationship with clients is preferable than focusing solely on the economic motive and seeking for short-term associations with them in order to keep them from transferring to a rival brand in the future.

Instead of concentrating on the conventional goals of increased sales and decreased expenses, businesses can extend their criteria for assessing any social media marketing effort. The metric for measuring the effectiveness of marketing campaigns should develop into more realistic objectives that assist marketers to obtain information on both current and future campaigns as a result of advancements in digital technology and the dynamic market environment. The enterprises should concentrate on keeping a competitive edge while also concentrating on their long-term survival.

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