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SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING: THE NEXT FRONTIER
(AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING PROSPECTIVE WITH REFERENCE TO PUNE CITY)

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ABSTRACT

Internet is becoming the town square for the global village of tomorrow." said Bill Gates and so right was Peter Ducker in anticipating that, "The new IT... Internet and e-mail... have eliminated the physical costs of communications." Jack Welch called internet as, "the Viagra of big business". Today tapping the online resources is not the only option but the need for every business organization. This study is very important as it has been done on the end users, it will help to understand the psyche of customers and help the organizations to build their product marketing strategies and policies accordingly. Even this study will work as a basic guideline for future research, so it will be of great importance for the academicians as well as researchers also. The data is collected from 100 respondents through questionnaire as well as interview format. The data is analyzed through Cross tabulation, Chi-square Test and Percentage Analysis. Statistical calculations and computations will be done through IBM SPSS statistical package (version 19.0). Through this research paper we come to know that in today's scenario due to technological advancement every one is an active member on social networking websites. Respondents are spending ample amount of time on these websites, which represents an opportunity for the organizations to lure the customer through this media. The size of a social network on an average is of around 300 persons per respondent, which is very suitable scenario for reference marketing activities to a marketing manager.

KEYWORDS

Social Media Marketing, Social Networking, Social Media Optimization (SMO).

INTRODUCTION

Today being online is a basic necessity for every business organization. Similar to T.V. and paper ads, a website is another essential communication tool. Through websites business can grow internationally in much better and efficient manner and is cost effective too. Online marketing is very volatile in nature as a good website can enlarge the customer base, while a bad one can affect your business more adversely than any other media i.e. Internet marketing practices should be given more importance than any other medium of advertising.

Now a days social media marketing has become a most common jargonized word. According to Philip Kotler, Nancy Lee and Michael Rothschild (2006) [1]

"Social media marketing is a process that applies marketing principles and techniques to create, communicate, and deliver value in order to influence target audience behaviors that benefit society (public health, safety, the environment and communities) as well as the target audience."

Social Media Marketing combines the internet marketing with social media (networking) websites. Any organization can use social media to manage their online reputation. Even social media marketing involve some form of viral marketing to communicate the information, idea or to create brand awareness, increase visibility within the market, and to sell a product or service.

Social Media Marketing campaigns should be targeted to the prospective community, so that the message appeals the targeted customers. For this first we need to do research and find out that for what purpose the targeted customers use social networking websites. Then what is their perception about the social media, how frequently they use these websites, and what kind of groups / communities they join. This will help the organizations to prepare their social media marketing strategies accordingly and avoid the chances of failure.

With reference to the above, we did the research to find out the social media marketing effectiveness with especial reference to Pune city. We used Questionnaire method to collect the data and use descriptive analysis, frequency analysis and Chi- square test as tools for analyzing the data.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) said as the number of internet users goes up, the growth impact of the internet will improve significantly. Broadband, it said, has a bigger impact on growth. The statistics provided by IAMAI shows that there are 900 million connection for mobile, 13 million for broadband and 120 million for internet connection in 2011. [6]

The Department of Information Technology expects to add 175 million broadband users by 2014, which will result in 700 million Internet users by that time. India has over 100 million internet users and the number of broadband users according to the latest data is just over 13 million. [2]

The internet growth in India has moved in the fast track, especially due to the onslaught of low-cost smart phone devices and the resultant mobile internet boom. Apart from smart phone devices, the evolution of the budget tablets is yet another source of accessing internet while on the move, that will have a positive impact on the growth of internet in India, which is all set to be the third largest internet market in the world after China and the United States.

According to Internet In India (I-Cube) 2011 report, the number of 'claimed' internet users in India has crossed the landmark 100 million mark in September 2011, at 112 million users (88 million urban + 24 million rural villages) who have used the internet at any point in time in the past. [3]

One research shows that around 94% internet users use emailing, 54% are active on social networking, 72% do music downloading, around 52% use info search engines, 56% do instant chatting / messaging, 50% users watch videos and around 56% use online media for Job search in India. [3, 4] More than fifty percent of online users are using internet for being socially active through social networking websites.

Annual India Digital Summit in its sixth edition on 18 January 2012 in New Delhi was held with a big focus on tapping the anticipated 600 million mobile internet user bases by 2020. [8] Dippak Khurana, founder and chief executive officer, Vserv Digital, called this as the curious case of mobile internet users. He shared that there are around 100 million mobile internet users and 500 million app downloads in India every month. "Video and social are growing as very powerful mediums. Despite all the bandwidth constraints in India, YouTube has over 35 million users and it has doubled over the last years," [8] He referred Social media as the dream baby of marketers one have to really understand the worth of the product to utilize social media in an effective way.

SOCIAL NETWORKING

Social networking is the combination of individuals into particular groups, small communities according to their will. Initially social networking was done in person, in various forms at workplace, at universities, and in neighborhoods. As technology becomes an integral part of individuals' life, social networking also comes online. Online networking is now one of the most popular ways of socializing through social networking websites. (Websites play role of media)

Social Networking is used to meet people, to gather and share first-hand information and experiences about individuals liking and disliking. The topics and interests of each person and group are as varied and rich as the universe.

Social networking websites solve the purpose of socializing for internet users. Online communities are formed in many forms depending upon members' common interests in hobbies, religion, or politics. One individual has to ask for access from a social networking website, once Social networking website grant the access one can begin to socialize through internet. [5]

Social networking websites are in existence since the mid-90, but in recent years, it has exploded across the World Wide Web. The Web 2.0 initiative made modern social networking sites increasingly popular and easier to use. One major benefit of online social networking is, it provides diversity with individuals able to access internet across globe. Meaning even if you are in India, you could build up an online community with members of different nations. Social Media can also be used as a new mean of learning as it makes the whole world one. Social Networking Website's main functional focus is on these aspects: [7]

1. **Networking:** To interact with friends, making new friends, joining groups of interest and to have discussion. (Facebook, Twitter, Orkut, Google+)
2. **Photo and Video Sharing:** Sharing photos or videos and commenting on user submissions. Getting current updates about friends' through their pictures and videos. (YouTube, Flickr)
3. **News:** To have updates about current happenings in the world in news format and even vote and opinionate on the same. (Digg)
4. **Bookmarking:** Interact within the group and share info through tagging websites and searching through websites bookmarked by others. (Blinklist, Simpy)
5. **Wikis:** Interacting by adding articles and editing existing articles.(Wikipedia, Wikia)

Same as real world online Social Networking has some disadvantages also such as; Data Theft and Viruses, Online Predators (Individuals who claim to be someone but they are not), and Fraud and Security issues. That is why using online social networking as a media for communication is a very critical aspect dealt by marketing managers.

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

Social media marketing usually focuses on efforts to create substance that attracts attention and encourages readers / internet users to share it with their social networks. A message spreads from user to user apparently resonates as it is coming from a user whom the receiver have trust, as opposed to the brand or company itself. Social media can help to increase communication for the organization which may results in better brand awareness and better customer services.

Reasons for increase in the usage of social media as a marketing tool by organizations are as:

1. It is a platform that is easily available to everyone with an internet access.
2. It is relatively inexpensive tool of communication for organizations to implement marketing campaigns.
3. The entry barrier in social media is greatly reduced, so it is easily accessible for every organization.
4. The organization can centralize its information and direct customers on its recent developments via social media channels.
5. Referral marketing may work magnificent with social media.

Social media marketing is also known as SMO Social Media Optimization. It benefits organizations and individuals by providing an added channel for customer support, a way to gain customer and competitive insight, acquisition and retention of new customers/business partners/ channel members, and a method of managing brand image online. [9] Also it helps to develop an easy feedback cum review system for a brand.

Companies recognize the need for information, originality, and accessibility employ blogs through social networking websites to make their products popular and unique, and ultimately reach out to consumers who are privy to social media. [10] The only point which has to be taken care while using social media as a marketing tool is that the content which the organization is floating should be relevant to the customer.

From the above literature review it is clear that in current scenario social media plays a vital role in integrated marketing mix for any organization as India is going to be the third largest internet user base country. Through this research project we will be able to find the potential of social media as a marketing tool with reference to Pune city. In this research we are going to narrow down the potential area so that for the marketer it will work as strategic point for decision making.

OBJECTIVES OF STUDIES

Based on the literature review, following objectives have been framed:

1. To find out the awareness of social networking website with reference to Pune City.
2. To study the interest area of consumers while using social networking websites with reference to Pune city.
3. To study various factors and aspects with the usage of social networking websites.
4. To find out the relationship between the gender and frequency of websites usage.
5. To find out the major purpose of using social networking sites with reference to Pune city.
6. To study the various activities under the socializing factor.

HYPOTHESIS

- For research objective 4

H₀: Frequency of usage of social networking websites is independent of Gender of users.

H_a: Frequency of usage of social networking websites is not independent of Gender of users.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. **Sample Design:** The present study is based on the primary data which was collected from 100 sample respondents. The 100 respondents were selected by using random sampling technique.
2. **Data Collection:** Questionnaire as well as interview method was being used to collect data. The questionnaires were filled through e-mails, social networking websites and schedules.
3. **Area and Period of the Study:** This study is confined to Pune city (Maharashtra, India). The data was collected within 2 months (May and June 2012).
4. **Framework and Tools for Analysis:** Data collected through questionnaire were presented in a master table and required sub-tables were prepared. For analyzing the data, descriptive analysis, Cross Tabulation, Chi-square Test and Percentage Analysis were applied. Statistical calculations and computations are done through IBM SPSS statistical package (version 19.0).

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The total number of respondents selected for this research was 100, out of which 4 respondents were unaware of social networking websites. That is why the remaining questions for them were invalid. Resultant the analysis for the research study is done on 96 respondents only.

For the analysis the sample size reduced to 96 respondents.

From Table I: In this table N represent the number of respondents who are active for that particular networking websites.

TABLE I : SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKING WEBSITES FREQUENCIES

Social Media Networking Websites	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
use Facebook	96	18.0%	100.0%
use Google +	79	14.8%	82.3%
use Orkut	59	11.1%	61.5%
use twitter	61	11.4%	63.5%
use LinkedIn	80	15.0%	83.3%
use YouTube	76	14.3%	79.2%
use MySpace	26	4.9%	27.1%
use Ibibio	28	5.3%	29.2%
use Flickr	28	5.3%	29.2%
Total	533	100.0%	555.2%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

Through table I, we come to know that 100% of respondents are aware of Facebook - the social networking website, which is followed by LinkedIn with 83.3% and Google+ with 82.3%.

From Table II: In this table N represent the number of respondents who are active member of various groups.

TABLE II : ACTIVE MEMBER OF GROUPS - FREQUENCIES

Types of Active Group	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Member of Information Group	41	16.8%	45.6%
Member of Entertainment Group	32	13.1%	35.6%
Member of Social Group	69	28.3%	76.7%
Member of Technological Group	41	16.8%	45.6%
Member of News and current event Group	61	25.0%	67.8%
Total	244	100.0%	271.1%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

Table no II shows that maximum respondents are active member of social group that is 76.7%, followed by news and current event group (67.8%).

Table III: Count refers to the number of respondents.

TABLE III (A) TIME-SPEND ON SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES PER USAGE

		Time-spend on social networking Sites per usage				Total
		less than 1 hr	1 to 3 hr	3 to 5 hr	more than 5 hr	
Total	Count	23	49	18	6	96
	% of Total	24.00%	51.00%	18.80%	6.30%	100.00%

TABLE III (B) : MEDIA USED TO ACCESS SOCIAL NETWORKING WEBSITES

		Access through the Media				Total
		broadband home	USB modem	Mobile	office	
Total	Count	34	12	28	18	96
	% of Total	35.40%	12.50%	29.20%	18.80%	100.00%

TABLE III (C) : SIZE OF SOCIAL NETWORK

		Size of social network				Total
		31 to 50	51 to 100	101 to 300	more than 300	
Total	Count	17	6	44	29	96
	% of Total	17.70%	6.30%	45.80%	30.20%	100.00%

Through these tables it is clear that around 50% respondents spend 1hr to 3 hr on social networking websites. Broadband is the most used media for accessing internet for socializing online. Around 46% respondents have social network of range from 101 to 300 persons followed by more than 300 people.

Table IV

TABLE IV (A): GENDER AND FREQUENCY OF SITES USAGE CROSS TABULATION

			How often sites are being Used					Total
			Daily	Thrice A Week	Twice A Week	Weekly	Monthly	
gender	Male	Count	59	1	4	5	1	70
		% within gender	84.30%	1.40%	5.70%	7.10%	1.40%	100.00%
		% of Total	61.50%	1.00%	4.20%	5.20%	1.00%	72.90%
	Female	Count	11	1	4	10	0	26
		% within gender	42.30%	3.80%	15.40%	38.50%	0.00%	100.00%
		% of Total	11.50%	1.00%	4.20%	10.40%	0.00%	27.10%
Total		Count	70	2	8	15	1	96
		% of Total	72.90%	2.10%	8.30%	15.60%	1.00%	100.00%

TABLE IV (B): CHI-SQUARE TESTS

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	19.513 ^a	4	.001
Likelihood Ratio	18.300	4	.001
N of Valid Cases	96		

a. 6 cells (60.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .27.

The Chi-square value 19.513 is significant since the p – value (0.001) is less than level of significance $\alpha=0.05$. Thus the null hypothesis H_0 is rejected and we conclude that there is a relationship between gender and frequency of site usage. The value of df (4) indicate that the relationship is of moderate type, means the relationship between gender and frequency of site usage is moderate.

Table V

TABLE V: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS – EXTENT OF AGREEMENT WITH FOLLOWING FACTORS FOR USING SOCIAL NETWORKING WEBSITES

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
use SM To be socialize	6.07	1.267	-1.377	0.246	-1.481	0.488
Use SM To chit chat	4.43	1.397	0.141	0.246	0.816	0.488
use SM To time pass	4.14	1.404	0.617	0.246	0.261	0.488
Use SM To play games	3.64	1.748	0.807	0.246	0.653	0.488
Use SM To gain knowledge	4.98	1.698	0.546	0.246	1.042	0.488
Use SM to do Shopping Online	3.25	1.361	-1.017	0.246	-0.186	0.488
use SM for Others purpose	3.79	1.929	0.878	0.597	0.552	1.154

For table V we used 7- point ordinal scale where “7” refers to strongly agree and “1” for strongly disagree. For mean to be representative, standard deviation value should be less than 1/3 of mean. Mean value for factors to socialize, to chit chat, to passing the time and to gain knowledge are truly representative, while for other factors the mean value should be taken carefully.

Table VI

TABLE VI: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS – WITHIN SOCIALIZING MAIN FACTORS

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Stay in touch with current friends	5.96	1.528	-1.953	0.246	-3.252	0.488
Stay in touch with family	4.3	1.603	-0.524	0.246	0.51	0.488
To connect with Lost old friend	5.85	1.465	-1.567	0.246	-2.207	0.488
To get persons having same hobbies or interests	3.77	1.244	-0.021	0.246	1.158	0.488
To make new friends	4.08	1.739	-0.143	0.246	0.862	0.488
To follow celebrities,	3.27	1.72	0.456	0.246	0.818	0.488
To Find dating partner	2.39	1.558	1.189	0.246	-0.97	0.488

For table VI we used 7- point ordinal scale where “7” refers to strongly agree and “1” for strongly disagree. For mean to be representative, standard deviation value should be less than 1/3 of mean. Skewness value shows that maximum factors have right skewed curves, which is a representative case. Mean Value for to make new friends, to follow celebrities and to find dating partner should be carefully interpretive as the standard deviation is greater than 1/3 of mean value. For rest all factors the mean value is truly representative.

FINDINGS

From Table I and II:

1. Out of 100 respondents only 4 were not active on social media, so we can extrapolate that all respondents are aware of various social networking websites.
2. It is found that 100% active respondents are using Facebook – social networking website.
3. LinkedIn secured second rank with 83.3% of users, followed by Google+ with 82.3%.
4. Social group has maximum numbers of active member (76.7%); this is supported by table I (Facebook – 100%), so we can extrapolate that social networking websites are majorly used for socializing purpose.
5. It is found that members in news and current events group are 67.8%.
6. Members in Information and technological group are equal i.e. 45.6%.
7. In case of entertainment group only 35.6% of active members are there.

From Table III:

1. Time spend on social networking websites by maximum respondents (51%) is from 1hr to 3 hrs per usage.
2. Only 6.30% respondents are there who spend more than 5hrs on social networking websites.
3. 35.4% respondents use broadband at home and 29.2% use mobiles to access the social networking websites.
4. 45.80% respondents have social network of around 101 to 300 people, followed by 30.2% respondents having social network of size more than 300.

From Table IV:

1. Frequency of usage of social networking websites is dependent to gender of users. The relationship between the gender and frequency of usage is moderated in nature.
2. Overall around 72.9% respondent use social networking websites daily.
3. From the total sample size of 96, 70 are male who use social networking websites and rest 26 are female.
4. 84.3% male use daily social networking websites, followed by 5.7% twice a week.
5. 42.3% females use daily while 38.5% females use social networking websites once in a week.
6. The usage pattern is quite different with respect to gender. Maximum male use daily while female group is majorly divided in two segments: daily and once in a week.

From Table V and VI:

1. Through mean value we can interpret that major respondents strongly agree that social networking websites are used for socializing purpose.
2. Respondents agree that social media is used for gaining knowledge, passing the time and chitchatting (mean value around 5 - Agree).
3. Regarding the use of social media for playing games, shopping and other purposes, respondents are undecided about their opinion.
4. It is found that respondents are somewhat agree for staying in touch with current friends and to get connected with old friends are the reasons for socializing.
5. Respondents disagree to the reason of finding dating partner with socializing through social networking websites.

SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings of the study, following suggestions can be made

1. As the penetration level of social media is very high, it can be used as an important tool in marketing mix by the organizations.
2. Referral and internet marketing can be combined with social media marketing for gaining greater customer base, which will indeed help to acquire new customers.
3. Integration between social media and mobile present magnificent opportunity for the organization to tap the unused market.
4. Organizations can segment markets of their product according to gender and other differentiators; adopting different strategies for them. For e.g.: most of Male access social networks daily while Female access weekly.
5. Socializing is the main purpose for using social networking websites so organizations should not directly market their product. They should employ strategies for socializing which will lead to goodwill making and in long run results in favor of the organizations. Such as goibibo through their social network, promotes community gaming increasing time spend on the website, thus increasing visibility of product campaigns.

CONCLUSIONS

Over the years, online marketing has grown in importance. Online media offers numerous marketing tools to the companies. Social media allows companies to interact directly with customers via various Internet platforms and monitor. Interacting with customer will provide opinions about the product and even evaluations of services can be done remarkably. Social media constitute excellent vehicles for fostering relationships with customers.

"Social media is nothing but equals to people's conversations and actions online that can be mined by advertisers for insights but not coerced to pass along marketing messages. It's the new form of media that does not exist until it happens and that cannot be bought by advertisers to carry their messages."

Dr. Augustine Fou – Marketing Science Consulting Group, Inc. [10]

Social Media is the backbone to Internet Marketing. With over 700,000,000 people on Facebook alone, it is crucial that businesses create communities on these social networks and utilize these networks for their benefits. To ensure having the advantage in a business-consumer relationship, businesses have to be aware of four key assets that consumers maintain: information, involvement, community, and control. [11] Through Social media marketing we can use these four assets in more effective way to maintain the relationship.

Social media marketing is one of the best pull techniques, through which customers are pulled in by good content / information about the product. On the other hand traditional marketing push products at prospective clients through paid form of marketing as advertising or brochures. In short we can say that social media marketing is the next frontier for which every organization should be prepared to ripe it fully.

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