

Customers' Attitude towards Social Media Marketing

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Abstract

The usage of Social Media is increasing exponentially to satisfy the social needs of internet users, at the same time it has also increased the opportunities for corporate to market their products & services in a personalized way. The past record shows that social media has contributed significantly in changing the perception of customers in buying process. Organizations can't ignore the growing importance of social networking sites on the buying behavior of customers.

This paper is an attempt to examine the extent of social media in making/ influencing buying decision of customers. The paper is based on descriptive research design & close ended questionnaire is used to collect the primary data from social media users. Conclusions of paper reveal the attitude of customers' towards social media marketing.

Introduction

Social media is changing the way information is communicated to and from people around the world. The rapid use of social media such as blogs and other social networking sites and media-sharing technology is changing the way firms respond to consumer's needs and wants and changing the way they respond to their competitors. Marketers now have the opportunity to engage in broader and more innovative forms of online mass media communications by using the social media marketing tools. Social networking programs group individuals by interests, hometowns, employers, schools and other commonalities. Social networking is also a significant target area for marketers seeking to engage users.

Social media such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are dynamic tools that facilitate online relationships. It is a relatively low cost form of marketing and allows organisations to engage in direct and end-user contact. Given the choices made available to consumers and the influential role of social media marketing, the brands and consumers have a changing role to play in the organisation's strategy in that they now have an economic impact. Brands influence customer choice. Customers influence other customers. These chains of events affect repurchases, which further affect future earnings and long term organisational sustainability.

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All in all, it helps a company increase awareness of its brand, generate leads, build its customer base, improve sales and market share. If planned and executed properly, social media becomes a very cost effective mode of online promotions.

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This paper is focusing on the perception of customers towards social media and its marketing practices. It will also be helpful in identifying the parameters on which organizations should prefer social media marketing instead of traditional marketing.

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Literature Review

Sliva, Bhuptani, Menon & D'Sliva (2011) have made an attempt to understand the usage pattern of social media among youth in the city of Mumbai. It also aimed at assessing the influence of social media on the consumer buying behaviour.

Results from the analysis indicated that social media is a very important tool for networking among youngsters.

Bashar, Ahmad & Wasiq (2012) have done an empirical research to understand the effectiveness of social media as a marketing tool and an effort has been made to analyze the extent social media helps consumers in buying decision making. Results of paper suggested that The medium is growing very fast and holds huge potential but is still in its nascent stage in India. Therefore, it is time for the companies to make effective strategies and execute them to win larger share of business through this revolutionary medium and become the innovative firm of coming future.

Vij & Sharma(2013) have done a study on social media experience of consumers and marketers in the State of Punjab. Based on the results of the study and reviewed literature, the paper suggested the measures for effective Social Media Marketing (SMM) strategies that Above all, social media marketing content should be 'interesting', 'informative', 'interactive' and 'reliable'. Marketers should align their social media marketing effort with the changing tastes and preferences of customers.

Yadav (2012) has made an attempt to set up the significance of social networks as an advertising medium and evaluated the existing advertising methods that are in trend via certain case studies and concluded that social websites are not just a tool to interact with the different people but also medium to reach the prospective customers.

Bhakuni & Aronkar (2012) tried to understand the usage pattern of social media among the students of Gwalior city and also assessed the influence of social media advertising on the purchasing intention of the students. The study concluded that social media is a rapidly growing area with large number of young students associating with it and there is a strong positive relationship between purchase intention and social media advertising.

Dash (2011) explored the relevant factors applicable for online marketing awareness, Purpose of use and usage of social networking sites and concluded that college students are well aware about different social networking sites and their use & popularity is

increasing hence it is serving as a very good medium to connect students. Therefore, marketing with the help of these sites can play an important role for online marketing but it is necessary to ensure product quality since user groups are educated.

Objectives

- To study the influence of social media on consumer buying behavior.
- To study the perception of customers towards social media marketing practices used by marketers.

Hypothesis

There is not significant relationship between awareness and preference of brands that are promoted on social media sites.

Research Methodology

- Research Design:** To analyze the behavior of customers towards Social Media Marketing descriptive research design was used. Primary data was collected with the help of close ended questionnaire.
- Sample Design:** Our target population involves the users of Social Media. 100 Internet users were selected through convenience sampling from Udaipur.
- Analysis:** The data collected was analyzed with the help of various statistical tools like frequency distribution, Chi-square test, and arithmetic mean.

Analysis & Interpretations

Demographic Profile of Respondents

As shown in Table I demographics of respondents were classified according to their gender, education, age, monthly income & average monthly purchase from organized retail outlet. Out of total respondents 57% are male & rests are female. Majority of respondents are graduate (48%) & 37% respondents belong to the age group of 25 to 35 years. 38% of respondents have their monthly income in the range of Rs. 30,001 to Rs. 40,000 and 28% respondents have their monthly income from Rs. 20,001 to Rs. 30,000.

Awareness of Social Media Websites

Out of the total respondents 92% respondents were aware about the social media so further study was conducted with these group of people only. **Table II**

Brand Awareness through Social Media Websites

Respondents were asked that whether social media websites make them aware about various brands in different product categories, the responses of same are shown in **Table III**.

Majority of customers (i.e. 73.9%) admitted this fact that social media help them to identify the brands available in the market. It increases their awareness level towards the availability of brand. On the counter side 26.1% of respondents said that social media does not increase their awareness towards the brands.

Brand Preference through Social Media Websites

Every marketer wants to know whether the customer prefers the brand which is advertised through social media. In the same line respondents were asked to reveal their purchase intention towards the brand which is advertised on social media websites. **Table IV**.

60.9% of respondents said that they prefer the brand which is advertised on social media, it clearly shows that impact of social media on brand preference among customer is significant. On the other side still there are 39.1% respondents who don't prefer the brand advertised on social media.

Relationship between Brand Awareness & Brand Preference through Social Media Websites

To study the influence of social media on buying behavior of customer the data of brand awareness & brand preference was clubbed as under:

It can be clearly inferred from the table that majority of customers who get aware about brand through social media, they also purchase the same brand. To be very precise following hypothesis was tested:

H_0 : There is no significant relationship between awareness and preference of brands that are promoted on social media sites.

H_1 : There is a significant relationship between awareness and preference of brands that are promoted on social media sites.

The analysis provides enough evidence to reject the null Hypothesis. In other words there is no significant relationship between awareness and preference of brands that are promoted on social media sites.

Perception of Customers towards Social Media Marketing Practices

Respondents were requested to share their level of agreement on 7 statements about their perception towards social media marketing.

The degree of agreement towards statements was set from 1 to 5 (5 denotes the strongly disagree, whereas, 1 is the strongly disagree).

In addition following criteria is used for analysis:-

The score among 1.00-1.80 means Strongly Disagree

The score among 1.81-2.60 means Disagree

The score among 2.61-3.40 means Neutral

The score among 3.41-4.20 means Agree

The score among 4.21-5.00 means Strongly Agree

Statement 1

Customers are agreeing with the statement that Advertisements through social media are more interesting than traditional advertising, which shows that marketers should move their promotional efforts from traditional tools to social media tools.

Statement 2

The more interaction with customers can motivate them more to purchase the advertised brand. Here it is clear from the mean score of second statement that customers strongly believe that Social media advertisements are more interactive than traditional advertising.

Statement 3

Customers were asked to compare the social media advertising & traditional advertising on informative ground, & result revealed that customers found Social

media advertising more informative than traditional advertising. It shows that in social media advertising information can be revealed more effectively in comparison to traditional advertising.

Statement 4

There are so many experts available on social media websites who provide opinion to customers before purchasing any product and service, respondents were asked to share their view that whether they consider these opinions or not. No clear view is received on this opinion so it can not be said certainly that whether customers refer to the opinion of experts on social media sites while considering any product or service or not.

Statement 5

Anybody can subscribe to updates and alerts regarding a brand or product through social media networking but the respondents taken under study don't subscribe to these updates

Statement 6

Innovation is highly needed to increase the market share and respondents are agreeing on the point that organizations that use social media for marketing purpose are more innovative than others who are not using it. It means to be more innovative organizations must advertise through social media websites.

Statement 7

The respondents taken under study feel comfortable in sharing their information on social media websites so it can be said that while advertising on social media websites, marketers can also get additional information about prospects which can help them to target customers in a better way.

Conclusions

- Majority of Internet users are aware about social media & they are using it also, so it can be a great tool for brand promotion, if used efficiently.

- Social media not only make customers' aware about brands, but customers also prefer the brands advertised through social media while making their final purchase. But still there is no significant relationship between awareness and preference of brands that are promoted on social media sites.
- Customers have positive perception towards social media marketing practices; they consider social media advertising more interesting, innovative, informative and interactive as compare to traditional advertising.

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Table I: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Particulars	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	68	57
	Female	52	43
Education	Intermediate	12	10
	Graduate	58	48
	Post Graduate	20	17
	Professional	30	25
Age Group	Below 25	24	20
	25-35	44	37
	36-50	40	33
	51-60	12	10
Monthly Income	Less Than Rs. 10,000	6	5
	Rs. 10,001 - Rs. 20,000	18	15
	Rs. 20,001 - Rs. 30,000	34	28
	Rs. 30,001 - Rs. 40,000	46	38
	More Than Rs. 40,000	16	13

Table II: Awareness of Social Media Websites

S. No.	Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Yes	92	92%
2	No	08	8%
Total		100	100%

Table III: Brand Awareness through Social Media Websites

S. No.	Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Yes	68	73.9%
2	No	24	26.1%
Total		92	100%

Table IV: Brand Preference through Social Media Websites

S. No.	Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Yes	56	60.9%
2	No	36	39.1%
Total		92	100%

Table V: Relationship between Brand Awareness & Brand Preference through Social Media Websites

Factor		Brand Awareness		Total
		Yes	No	
Brand Preference	Yes	46	10	56
	No	22	14	36
Total		68	24	92

Table VI: χ^2 test

χ^2 test			
Calculated Value	Degree of Freedom	Level of Significance	Tabulated Value
33.91	1	5%	3.841

Table VII: Perception of Customers towards Social Media Marketing Practices

S. No.	STATEMENT	Mean Score	Level of Agreement
1	Advertisements through social media are more interesting than traditional advertising.	3.69	Agree
2	Social media advertisements are more interactive than traditional advertising.	4.21	Strongly Agree
3	Social media advertising is more informative than traditional advertising.	3.87	Agree
4	I refer to the opinion of experts on social media sites while considering any product or service.	2.65	Neutral
5	I am subscribed to updates and alerts regarding a brand or product through social media networking sites.	2.12	Disagree
6	Organizations that use social media for marketing purpose are more innovative than others who are not using it.	3.74	Agree
7	I feel comfortable in sharing my information on social media sites.	3.51	Agree