



Social Media Marketing: A Study of Select Sectors in India

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Abstract:

This study aims to analyze the usage of social media in marketing communication programs implemented by brands and organizations. The study summarizes empirical evidence of frequency of usage, budgeting, purposes of use and metrics of evaluation, with respect to social media within different sectors. A comparative study of use of social media as a marketing communication tool, across select sectors namely Fast Moving Consumer Goods, Automobile, Consumer Electronics/Home Appliances and Banking, Financial Services and Insurance, was carried out. To study the organizational differences in all the variables, analysis of variance (ANOVA) was applied to examine the difference in means. LSD Post-Hoc comparisons were carried out to confirm where the differences occurred between groups. Significant differences were observed in use of various social media platforms, and frequency of managing social media within different sectors covered in the study.

Keywords: marketing communication, social media adoption, social media usage, metrics of evaluation

1. Introduction

Social media has attracted millions of users, since inception and most of them have integrated these sites into their daily practices. There are hundreds of social media, with various technological affordances, supporting a wide range of interests and practices. While their key technological features are fairly consistent, the cultures that emerge around social media are varied. Most sites support the maintenance of pre-existing social media, but others help strangers connect based on shared interests, political views, or activities. Some sites cater to diverse audiences, while others attract people based on common language or shared racial, sexual, religious, or nationality-based identities. Sites also vary in the extent to which they incorporate new information and communication tools, such as mobile connectivity, blogging, and photo/video-sharing.

Companies deploy online social media, platforms, tools and services in various activities aiming to create better experience for consumers which can lead to loyalty, better branding and increase of sales. Facebook has emerged as the most important platform for marketers in India, followed by Twitter, YouTube and Blogging. Being a popular social media platform in India, Facebook is the favorite playground for social media-savvy organizations in India to engage in everyday conversations and organize engaging promotions and contests for fans.

2. The Changing Marketing Communications Environment

Internet has the credibility of immediacy and fastness, and brings globalization in every aspect of communication. Communication through internet is more specified, with effective interactive strategy among its users. The IAMAI (Internet & Mobile Association of India)¹ and The Boston Consulting Group (BCG)² report -India@Digital. Bharat establishes that India is headed towards an Internet

¹ Internet & Mobile Association of India is a not-for-profit industry body registered under the Societies Act, 1986. Its mandate is to expand and enhance the online and mobile value added services sectors.

economy worth \$200 billion by 2020, that will contribute to 5 per cent of the GDP growing at 23 per cent compared to the overall 13 per cent. This expansion offers India an opportunity to transform its internet profile, to expand usage even beyond current projections, and to boost GDP substantially. One of the greatest uses of internet has been its usage in marketing communication. Promotion on digital platforms is gaining prominence.

In recent days, internet advertising has taken a new form which has more advantages over the traditional mediums like print media, television and radio. Marketing communication is becoming precise, personal, interesting, interactive and social. Different strategies of communication are followed in various social media like Facebook, Twitter. They not only create impact over the audience, but also make them interact with the marketing statistics created. Consumers get more attached to brand communication in social media than traditional forms of communication. These media bring more interactive communication with advertising. Social media have become one of the most efficient tools of marketing communication for highly targeted marketing and advertising.

Given the global reach and interactive capabilities of social media, companies across key industries have started developing a social media marketing strategy with increased marketing budget allocations. The key influencers include direct access to a large user base of potential consumers, and insights into key changing trends and the thought processes behind buying decisions. Although it varies across industries, social media marketing's broad focus is on developing products targeted at specific consumer groups, launching new product offerings and monitoring brand image sentiments.

Social media has become an increasingly important part of the online experience and is used daily by millions of people. Brands are directly and indirectly affected by communication generated online.

Indians are increasingly logging into their Facebook and Twitter accounts, with the country recording the highest social networking growth of 37.4% this year, according to a new study (Source: eMarketer³: Social Network Users Statistics: India 2013 till 2017).

India will also have the world's largest Facebook population by 2016, research firm eMarketer found. Social media audience has become a hot area for organizations, brands and recruiters to reach their niche audience. With over one billion individuals, logged on to various social media, people are now using social media for advice on what products to buy, where to shop and even what firms they want to work with.

As per research undertaken by eMarketer, 75% of Indians who are internet subscribers, use social media like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest etc. Interaction with friends, relatives, colleagues and community, live chat, status updates, image- as well as video-sharing are some of the major activities by Indians who spend close to 30 minutes every day online on different social media.

According to Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI), 97 per cent of social network users are on Facebook. And they are spread beyond the big metros. One-third of social media users live in towns with a population of less than 5 million; 25 per cent of the total users live in towns with less than 2 million inhabitants. Social media usage is also fast catching up with mobile internet users. According to the report, 77 percent of the users access social networking on mobile phones. Email, social media, Google search, app store and chat / instant messaging are used every day by those accessing internet through mobile. Indians are very active on different social media and are also actively increasing the amount of time they spend on various social media platforms.

It has been shown that people with social media now have the opportunity to create and share their own brand related content. The user generated content has a direct impact on brand affinity and even sales, as consumers tend to trust other consumers over brand and hereby enterprises. Social media is changing the communication processes as the power shifts from enterprise to consumer and content generated becomes the message.

2.1. Research Gap

Although the growth of social media marketing in the developing countries is promising, there are obvious challenges in reaching diverse customer groups from this marketing channel due to fragmented industries, low literacy rates and the relatively underdeveloped mobile infrastructure.

Despite the acknowledged impact of the internet on integrated marketing communication, very few studies have investigated the specific requirements and prospects for IMC in the online environment (Durkin and Lawlor, 2001; Reich, 1998). The increased fragmentation of media and customers, as well as the revolution introduced in mass communication by the new communication channels – internet and mobile communication technologies – has called for the need for a new approach to marketing communication (McArthur and Griffin, 1997; Semenik, 2002; Smith, 2002).

Pickton and Broderick (2001) claim that synergy is the principal benefit of bringing together the various aspects of marketing communications in a mutually supportive way. From this perspective, marketing communication decisions should focus on the marketing communications channel that offers the highest benefit for all the stakeholders. Vollmer and Precourt (2008), said that customers are turning away from the traditional sources of advertising, such as radio and television, and that they consistently insist on more control over their media consumption. Lindberg, Nyman & Landin (2010), examined how to implement and evaluate an online channel extension through Social Media, which compares and contrasts conventional marketing practices with social media marketing in the context of micro firms and then suggests these micro firms as which tools are more suitable for them.

² The Boston Consulting Group is an international strategy and general management consulting firm, having more than 80 offices across the globe.

³eMarketer is an independent market research company that provides insights and trends related to digital marketing, media and commerce. eMarketer, founded in 1996, is located in New York

The use of social media as marketing tool is gradually growing, for various advantages they offer to companies, start-ups, etc. In India, the growth of social media like Facebook and its acceptability amongst people have opened new avenues for the marketers. The companies use social media for different reasons based on the companies' strategies and at the same time have to devise metrics of evaluating use of social media in marketing.

Social media usage varies in different sectors, as per the needs and utility in various companies. There is a need to explore how the planning, implementation or execution, measurement happens in various sectors. These findings will help in comparing the social media strategy amongst various marketing organization, and future road of directions can be planned out.

3. Research Methodology

This study attempted to understand the nature, and level, of social media' usage by businesses and brands in India; its objectives and measurement. The research aimed at finding out how social media are used in different organizations with special reference to purposes of usage and metrics/measurement of effectiveness.

A comparative study of use of social media as a marketing communication tool, across selected sectors was carried out. Sectors covered in the study were FMCG (Fast Moving Consumer Goods), Automobile, Consumer Electronics/Home Appliances and Banking, Financial Services and Insurance.

In this research, the self-constructed questionnaire was used for conducting the survey. The questionnaire was based on inputs from "Social Media Marketing- India Trends Study- Insights from social media-savvy brands in India- 2nd edition (2015)- Ernst & Young", & "India Social Media Report, Edition 2 by Blogworks and NMinicite (A Nielsen/ McKinsey company), as well as, discussions with few social media experts and digital marketers. Both offline and online methods were used for collecting data. This particular study was conducted in the month of January and February 2016.

The purposes, for which social media are used by brand/organizations, were evaluated across sectors. These purposes include: Provide product information/knowledge; Integrate current ad campaign; Two way communication; Speedy redressal of grievances; Faster replies to feedback; Better knowledge of upcoming marketing campaigns; Competitive intelligence; Lead generation; E commerce; Online reputation management or Online PR; Product ideas and development; Sales promotion (contests, events, etc.); Launch of new products or extensions; Buzz creation; Recruitment; Information about channel or dealerships.

The considered metrics which the organizations deploy to evaluate success of social media as an effective marketing communication tool were - Growth in number of participants (users, fans, friends, followers etc. on web or mobile touch points & community); Impact on sentiment and opinion; Volume, quality & cost of lead generated or conversions; E-commerce revenues; Brand awareness; Insights of customers, competition, market; Impact on sales; Support during crisis; Share of voice vis-à-vis agreed competition; Search engine ranking or web traffic; Customer satisfaction score (including net promoter score or recommendations); Co-creation of products & services; Mention & prominence in relevant conversations; Increased engagement scores (retweets, likes, comments).

3.1. Sampling and Data Collection

The data was collected from companies which have incorporated social media in their marketing communication program.

Desired audience were senior and midlevel managers working in advertising, branding and marketing; professionals in advertising agencies or digital and social media agencies; people involved indirectly in marketing communication in organizations

Judgmental and Convenience sampling methods were used to collect data. Around 250 brands/organizations were reached, out of which, 147 responded. 10 responses were found to be incomplete / unsuitable, so the total responses used in the study was 137.

Brands/Organizations covered in study: FMCG: 50, Consumer Electronics/Home Appliances: 30, Automobile: 31, Banks and Financial Services: 26

GroupM⁴ estimates show digital advertising will account for 12.7% of all ad spending in 2016, up from 9.9% in 2015(livemint.com, January 20, 2016).As per this article, Consumer product, automobile and e-commerce companies will continue to drive growth (as they did in 2015) and telecom, banking and finance.

The basis of choosing these four sectors was to include a mix of products and services in the study.

To find out the differences between the nature and level of usage, purposes and metrics of measurement, across four sectors, seven hypotheses were framed.

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was applied to examine the difference in means through which, the organizational differences in all the variables were obtained. LSD Post-Hoc comparisons helped in confirming the differences between groups.

3.2. Hypotheses

Marketing communication is a critical component of marketing activities. Effective marketing communication will ensure that the right messages are conveyed to the right audiences through the right channels. The measure of effectiveness will occur through the achievement of goals and objectives that may focus on such things as raising awareness, increasing preference and, of course, generating leads and sales. Types of marketing communication concepts include: clearly identifying and understanding the target audience, differentiating oneself against the competition, developing key messages to address potential audience questions and concerns, and selecting communication channels designed to reach audiences at an optimum time (Richards L,

⁴GroupM is the leading global media investment management operation serving as the parent company to WPP media agencies including Mindshare, MEC, MediaCom, and Maxus, each global operation in their own right with leading market positions.

2016).

Companies may use different form of communication channels depending on their objectives. So the first hypothesis was framed as:

- H_{01} : There is no significant difference in use of various forms of marketing communication channels across different sectors. Indian organizations are spending money, resources and are coming up with initiatives to boost their sales through social medium and in turn are helping pace up the social media industry itself. Few sectors integrated social media in their marketing communication at an early stage, whereas others followed later. There's a need to find out whether there's a difference in the timings of adoption of social media by organizations.

- H_{02} : There is no significant difference in years of engagement through social media channels across different sectors.

Several brands have introduced emerging forms of social media to bring in innovation and creativity in their marketing communication. There's a need to understand whether there's difference in use of various forms of social media within organizations.

- H_{03} : There is no significant difference in use of various forms of social media channels across different sectors.

Trust in a company and brand is no longer dependent on company-controlled, traditional, mass channels, but rather on communities and offline and online communities. Companies are assigning marketing budget to digital and social media marketing in order to successfully reach and market to customers. Allocation of budget towards social media may vary depending on the industry and various other factors.

- H_{04} : There is no significant difference in budget allotted to social media across different sectors.

There is a need of proper content creation and its management on social media platforms. It's important that brands monitor their content frequently. The next hypothesis framed was based on the frequency of managing and monitoring social media.

- H_{05} : There is no significant difference in frequency of managing social media across different sectors.

Business and marketing goals of an organization define its social media strategy. There could be various usages of social media within different organizations. The next hypothesis was postulated as:

- H_{06} : There is no significant difference in the purposes for which social media are used across different sectors.

Brands should be able to accurately track and trace the impact of social media marketing on set objectives. Different sectors might have varied metrics to measure the effectiveness. The last hypothesis was framed as:

- H_{07} : There is no significant difference in metrics deployed to evaluate effectiveness of social media, across different sectors.

4. Analysis

4.1. Variations in Use of Various Forms of Marketing Communication Channels across Different Sectors

The table 1 shows the descriptive and ANOVA results for various forms of marketing communication channels across different sectors. The various forms include traditional media like print, TV, radio, outdoors as well as new media platforms. The mean values of various forms of marketing communication channels used in FMCG, AUTO, CE/HA and BFSI are 3.91, 4.09, 3.70 and 3.91 respectively. This shows that all the four sectors use various marketing communication tools to a good extent.

Sector	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Significance	Remark
FMCG	50	3.91	.385	1.838	.143	Not Significant
AUTO	31	4.09	.449			
CE/HA	30	3.70	.669			
BFSI	26	3.91	.577			
Total	137	3.93	.515			

Table 1: Variations in Use of Various Forms of Marketing Communication Channels across Different Sectors

The results of ANOVA, as shown above shows that significant difference do not exist for use of various forms of marketing communication channels across different sectors ($F=1.838$, sig. = .143). Since the associated probability is more than the significance level of 0.05, the null hypothesis " H_{01} : There is no significant difference in use of various forms of marketing communication channels across different sectors" is supported.

Overall, the mean of total responses came out to be 3.93, which exhibits a strong positive use of marketing communication tools by brands.

Across four sectors, various tools of marketing communication do not show significant differences, so it can be concluded that the importance of various form is imminent in all sectors. There is an integration of new media into traditional media, so marketers need to implement their marketing communication programme efficiently.

Multiple comparisons showed that only one paired groups show significant relationships. Significant differences were observed between Auto and Consumer Electronics/Home Appliances ($p= .022$).

It has been observed that marketing and advertising expenses have increased in automotive sector, due to launch of new brands on a frequent basis. So, we see that all forms of marketing communication have been efficiently utilized by auto industries. In 2013, we saw the aggressive social media advertising of Ford Eco sport, a new SUV which was launched around mid-2013 in Indian market. Brands are integrating new media into the traditional forms for reaching right target audience at a lesser cost.

Moreover, the number of brands launched under automotive sector is less in number as compared to those launched under consumer durables category.

4.2. Variations in Years of Engagement through Social Media Channels across Different Sectors

The table 2 shows the descriptive and ANOVA results for various forms of marketing communication channels across different sectors. The mean values of years of engagement through social media channels in FMCG, AUTO, CE/HA and BFSI are 2.68, 2.68, 2.70 and 2.65 respectively. This shows that all the four sectors have been engaged in various marketing communication tools for not very long.

Sector	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Significance	Remark
FMCG	50	2.68	1.096	.009	.999	Not Significant
AUTO	31	2.68	.979			
CE/HA	30	2.70	.877			
BFSI	26	2.65	1.129			
Total	137	2.68	1.021			

Table 2: Variations in Years of Engagement through Social Media Channels across Different Sectors

The results of ANOVA, as shown above shows that significant difference does not exist in years of engagement through social media channels across different sectors ($F=.009$, sig. = .999). Since the associated probability is more than the significance level of 0.05, the null hypothesis " H_02 : There is no significant difference in years of engagement through social media channels across different sectors" is supported.

The use of social media in marketing communication is not a very old phenomenon, though many social media already exist since a decade.

Most of the social media savvy organizations have implemented social media within last 2-3 years. The result as above indicates that, still there are opportunities for brands to give more importance to new media.

Many public sector and government organizations are still reluctant to use social media for marketing and advertising, as they have not realized its importance.

Across four sectors, no significant differences were found in the years of engagement through social media channels. Many brands initially used blogs to start interacting with customers, but emerging forms of social media i.e. Facebook, LinkedIn can provide more user friendly and better interactive platform.

No significant differences were observed between any paired groups. The results showed no variations in years of engagement through social media channels across different sectors. The results from multiple comparisons strongly supported the hypothesis that there is no difference in years of engagement.

4.3. Variations in Use of Various Forms of Social Media Channels across Different Sectors

The table 3 shows the descriptive and ANOVA results for various forms of marketing communication channels across different sectors. The mean values of use of various forms of social media channels in FMCG, AUTO, CE/HA and BFSI are 2.86, 3.17, 2.83 and 2.79 respectively. This shows that all the four sectors have been somewhat engaged in various forms of social media channels.

Sector	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Significance	Remark
FMCG	50	2.86	.334	4.015	.009	Significant
AUTO	31	3.17	.460			
CE/HA	30	2.83	.612			
BFSI	26	2.79	.611			
Total	137	2.91	.507			

Table 3: Variations in Use of Various Forms of Social Media Channels across Different Sectors

The results of ANOVA, as shown above shows that significant difference exists in use of various forms of social media channels across different sectors ($F=4.015$, sig. = .009). Since the associated probability is less than the significance level of 0.05, the null hypothesis " H_03 : There is no significant difference in years of engagement through social media channels across different sectors" is not supported.

The various forms of social media channels used are Company blog, Facebook, Twitter, Linked In, You Tube, Pinterest, Yahoo, Wikipedia, Google+, etc.

As per the multiple comparisons, AUTO showed significant differences with all other three sectors-Fast Moving Consumer Goods, Consumer Electronics/Home Appliances, Banking, Financial Services and Insurance. It has been seen in recent years that automotive sector has become very competitive, and there are number of international brands, present in the Indian market. So, there is a need for the brands to devise innovative marketing communication programs.

4.4. Variations in Budget Allotted to Social Media across Different Sectors

The table 4 shows the descriptive and ANOVA results for budget allotted to social media across different sectors. The mean values of budget allotted to social media in FMCG, AUTO, CE/HA and BFSI are 3.14, 3.29, 2.90 and 3.08 respectively. This shows that all the four sectors have somewhat allocated moderate budget on social media.

Sector	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Significance	Remark
FMCG	50	3.14	.670	.867	.460	Not Significant
AUTO	31	3.29	.783			
CE/HA	30	2.90	1.348			
BFSI	26	3.08	1.093			
Total	137	3.11	.960			

Table 4: Variations in Budget Allotted to Social Media across Different Sectors

The results of ANOVA, as shown above shows that significant difference does not exist in use of various forms of social media channels across different sectors ($F=.867$, sig. = .460). Since the associated probability is more than the significance level of 0.05, the null hypothesis "**H₀₄**: There is no significant difference in budget allotted to social media across different sector" is supported.

All the paired groups were not significant as concluded from LSD Post Hoc test. The mean differences were found to be highly insignificant. It can be inferred that the integration of social media in marketing communication is not an old phenomenon, so the budget allocation towards this part is still not very high, as compared to traditional forms of advertising.

4.5. Variations in Frequency of Managing Social Media across Different Sectors

The table 5 shows the descriptive and ANOVA results for frequency of managing social media across different sectors. The mean values of budget allotted to social media in FMCG, AUTO, CE/HA and BFSI are 4.68, 4.35, 4.00 and 4.08 respectively. This shows that all the four sectors have started integrating social media channels and at the same time, they are taking this seriously, through proper execution and monitoring.

Sector	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Significance	Remark
FMCG	50	4.68	.844	2.787	.043	Significant
AUTO	31	4.35	1.279			
CE/HA	30	4.00	1.365			
BFSI	26	4.08	1.230			
Total	137	4.34	1.172			

Table 5: Variations in Frequency of Managing Social Networking Site across Different Sectors

The results of ANOVA, as shown above shows that a significant difference exists in frequency of managing social media across different sectors ($F=2.787$, sig. = .043). Since the associated probability is less than the significance level of 0.05, the null hypothesis "**H₀₅**: There is no significant difference in frequency of managing social media across different sectors" is not supported.

Many of the global brands actively monitor their brand pages and maintain a proper online reputation management. Significant differences can be seen in the frequency of managing brand pages, as it was observed that public companies are less active on social media as compared to private companies. Banks and Financial services were less active in comparison to other sectors.

Two of the paired groups show significance as concluded from LSD Post Hoc test.

FMCG showed significant differences with CE/HA and BFSI.

4.6. Variations in the Purposes for which Social Media are used across Different Sectors

The table 6 shows the descriptive and ANOVA results for frequency of managing social media across different sectors. The mean values purposes for which social media are used across different sectors in FMCG, AUTO, CE/HA AND BFSI are 3.42, 3.44, 3.35 and 3.32 respectively.

Sector	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Significance	Remark
FMCG	50	3.42	.844	.529	.663	Not Significant
AUTO	31	3.44	1.279			
CE/HA	30	3.35	1.365			
BFSI	26	3.32	1.230			
Total	137	3.39	1.172			

Table 6: Variations in Purposes for which Social Media are used across Different Sectors

The results of ANOVA, as shown above shows that a significant difference exists in purposes for which social media are used across different sectors ($F=.529$, sig. = .663). Since the associated probability is more than the significance level of 0.05, the null hypothesis “ H_{06} : There is no significant difference in the purposes for which social media are used across different sectors” is supported.

All four sectors have mean values greater than 3, which imply that brands have fixed purposes in their social media strategies. The means of all the paired groups as per multiple comparisons showed non-significant differences. This means that all sectors are taking into consideration, the various purposes for which social media are used within marketing communication program.

4.7. Variations in Metrics Deployed to Evaluate Effectiveness of Social Media, across Different Sectors

The table 7 shows the descriptive and ANOVA results for frequency of managing social media across different sectors. The mean values purposes for which social media are used across different sectors in FMCG, AUTO, CE/HA AND BFSI are 3.42, 3.44, 3.35 and 3.32 respectively.

Sector	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Significance	Remark
FMCG	50	3.56	.373	.642	.590	Not Significant
AUTO	31	3.72	.356			
CE/HA	30	3.59	.615			
BFSI	26	3.62	.712			
Total	137	3.61	.505			

Table 7: Variations in Metrics Deployed to Evaluate Effectiveness of SNSs across Different Sectors

The results of ANOVA, as shown above shows that a significant difference does not exist in metrics deployed to evaluate effectiveness of social media, across different sectors ($F=.642$, sig. = .590). Since the associated probability is more than the significance level of 0.05, the null hypothesis “ H_{07} : There is no significant difference in metrics deployed to evaluate effectiveness of social media, across different sectors” is supported.

The mean values across all four sectors are greater than 3, so it can be inferred that brands across various sectors have implemented metrics for evaluating the effectiveness of social media.

The means of all the paired groups show non-significant differences. This means that all sectors have started using a combination of metrics to calculate the return on investment.

	Hypothesis	Result
H ₀₁	There is no significant difference in use of various forms of marketing communication channels across different sectors.	Supported
H ₀₂	There is no significant difference in years of engagement through social media channels across different sectors.	Supported
H ₀₃	There is no significant difference in use of various forms of social media channels across different sectors.	Not Supported
H ₀₄	There is no significant difference in budget allotted to social media across different sectors.	Supported
H ₀₅	There is no significant difference in frequency of managing social media across different sectors.	Not Supported
H ₀₆	There is no significant difference in the purposes for which social media are used across different sectors.	Supported
H ₀₇	There is no significant difference in metrics deployed to evaluate effectiveness of social media across different sectors	Supported

Table 8: Summary of Hypotheses Testing Results based on Use of Social media within Organizations

All the select sectors have been using a combination of traditional media and new media. The marketers need to address the issue of integration of various media forms. Significant differences were observed in use of various social media platforms like social media (Facebook, Linked In), You Tube, Blogs, etc.

The results showed a significant difference in frequency of managing social media by sectors covered in the study.

4.7.1. Social Media for Marketing

The current growth trends indicate that the next half-decade belongs to social media, and marketing based on this will be the fastest medium to advertise and sell products to end consumers. The growth of smartphones and the phenomenal growth in the number of users accessing social media from smartphones show clear directions on what is the next big thing. Given the robust and growing social networking infrastructure available, marketers should focus on nurturing awareness, increase data collection measurements and focus on converting social media leads into sales. Further, the conversions should be tracked and appropriately tied to the social media metrics. This would provide enough justification for the management to increase the investment in social media marketing. Marketers can achieve instant scale across the social media and create relevant content for individuals and niche audiences.

They can create true relationships with customers, unlike other marketing channels. This also makes a strong case for more investment on social network based marketing initiatives. These initiatives can be put into multiple areas of business from conventional CRM to sales and marketing.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Across the three sectors, radio seems to be the least preferred option as marketing communication channel. Most of the brands have started showing presence on non-conventional channels, as a good number have incorporated social media in their communication plan. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube are the popular social media channels where brands have better presence. Users are leaving traditional advertising outlets and giving more time, attention and "impressions" to new media.

Providing product information and knowledge, customer support and sales promotions are major purposes for the use of social media. The least preferred purposes for which brands use social media were competitive intelligence, ecommerce, recruitment and information about channel/dealerships. Marketers are widely using metrics of evaluation as: growth in number of participants, impact on sentiments and opinion, brand awareness, mention in conversations, increased retweets, likes, and comments. The least preferred metrics of testing effectiveness were E commerce revenues and co creation of products and services.

6. Recommendations

Social media/networks need the attention and the commitment of the top management. There needs to be a clear understanding of the relevance of this medium to the brand in question and a process to leverage it. Marketing oriented firms should think how to venture into the virtual world for brand and service extensions. Brands should start researching how brand competitors, and key stakeholders are utilizing social media.

With the advent of social media, consumer conversations about and with a brand have become more measurable. Marketers should continuously try to better understand this new form of engagement with their brands. This engagement—also known as “earned media”—can be measured with the same metrics as traditional paid media: lifts in brand awareness, message awareness, and purchase intent. Marketers should understand that the effectiveness and reach of paid versus earned media have found to be linked and complementary. Brands must use social media for customer support considering that today customer convenience lies online. For customer satisfaction and loyalty, there is no better place than social media. A customer communication channel built on social media is bound to create a buzz for any brand.

Social media marketing for brands is all about Facebook and Twitter currently Facebook, being the biggest social network in India is the tried and tested social media platform. Twitter, on the other hand, is being used as a reach mechanism and that is being achieved by getting certain hash tags trended. There are a few brands who have tried investing on different networks like Pinterest, Instagram, etc. Brands need to make effective use of other social media platforms, and integrate the marketing communication efforts.

With the tremendous growth in the use of social media, brands have been working hard with how best to capitalize on it. However, the way consumers view online social media means that not only the normal rules of marketing apply; brands need to emphasise on dialogue and a sense of community. The nature of social media is dynamic, and marketers need to recognize that they require active involvement, and a willingness to consider both sides of coin- ‘good and bad’.

One of the biggest problems of social media is the lack of effective uniform metrics to measure the ROI (Return on Investment). This lack of uniform metrics has led to an inherent restraint shown by clients and a marketer when it comes to digital ad spends, especially social media spends. It is recommended that the requirement for industry needs is regulation policies, enabling everyone to use uniform metrics for measurement, which will help in a more effective and trusted ROI.

Social media should form part of an Integrated Campaign: Social media alone cannot provide a 360 degree solution. Social media works pretty well with SEO (Search Engine Optimization), email, print, radio, TV, direct mail etc. The advent of new/ unconventional media platforms has taken place in addition to the traditional media. Almost in all cases, online media is effective only when supporting the existing traditional media campaigns.

Companies should take special care to be present on all social media platforms, and work on proper feedback mechanism and online reputation management.

7. Managerial Implications and Directions for Future Research

With increasing Internet penetration and the younger generation being addicted to the online space, we can safely presume that in years to come we will see a sharp increase in social media usage in India. This will definitely provide more opportunities for brands to understand social media platforms and better target consumers. However, Internet is dominated by the English language. Therefore, if brands in India want to utilize social media as a platform to engage with consumers, they need to localize their content for each of their target audiences.

Social media's usage as a marketing communication in our country is a field which is still in its incipient form. Marketers are devising new purposes, and metrics for use and evaluation, on the basis of changing market dynamics. New forms of usage, and evaluations might arise in future. The current study considers a set of purposes and metrics, which might undergo additions and deletions in near future.

Further research on usage of social media in marketing communication within organizations can be carried out, as only four different sectors were included in the study. Moreover, the metrics of evaluating social media's effectiveness undergo frequent changes. Continuous research is required in this area, though research and consulting agencies like Nielson, Ernst & Young, etc. are involved in tracking these developments in marketing communication.

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