

## Social media marketing in India – Creating new groundwork in marketing innovation

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### Abstract

Social media has risen to a great level in India since last few years. Social Media Marketing (SMM) is emerging as an innovation in the marketing field. In India SMM is catching fire since last 3 to 4 years. 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 and services in a personalized way. The past record shows that social media has contributed significantly in changing the perception of customers in buying process. Social media today, is among the 'best opportunities available' to a brand for connecting with prospective consumers. Social media is the medium to socialize. These new media have won the trust of consumers by connecting with them at a deeper level. Global companies have recognized social media marketing as a potential marketing platform. Hence, the need arises to study the state of social media use in marketing activities by Indian companies. This study is an attempt to create awareness among Indian marketers about the power of SM Environment spreading at large.

**Keywords:** Social media marketing

### 1. Introduction

Social media marketing (SMM) is the new method of marketing, which is based on the common principle of Word of Mouth (WOM). SMM is the latest innovation in the marketing world. Social media is hot. Social Media is now the trend. And for businesses it represents a marketing opportunity that transcends the traditional middleman and connects companies directly with customers. This is why nearly every business on the planet from giants like Starbucks and IBM to the local ice cream shop are exploring social media marketing initiatives. Social media marketing is marketing using online communities, social networks, blog marketing and more. It's the latest "buzz" in marketing. India is probably among the first proponents of social media marketing. The explosion of social media phenomenon is mind boggling and the pace at which it is growing is maddening. Trust and goodwill are the basis of social networking. It is probably the only marketing platform that encourages fool proof communication and accountability among sellers as well as consumers.

Marketing via social media has become more and more interesting as the days are passing by. There is an excellent example to prove the above statement. India is called the country of three C's: Cricket, Cinema, and Congress. India loves Cricket and its cricket stars. India is among the few countries where its own film industry, better known as Bollywood beats Hollywood. Also, Congress has been a long time darling of India as far as politics is concerned. It goes without saying, that India follows what the three C's. India's top movie stars like Shahrukh Khan, Priyanka Chopra, Abhishek Bachchan etc. join Twitter to market their movies. But, the fact that Bollywood's highest earning movie, 3 Idiots released on YouTube just three months after its Global release showed the signal of Bollywood's new found love in YouTube. Congress embraced this new age media by creating fan pages for Rahul Gandhi and the former Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh. Shahi Tharoor has over 600,000 followers on twitter and his human tweets made sure, he is in the news at

all times. Our own Honorable Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi won a prize for social media. Last but not the least, IPL 3.0 was the first to be telecasted live on YouTube. This can be considered the ultimate tribute of the IPL to the new age Indian who loved YouTube as much as they love cricket.

### 1.1 Literature Review

Bashar, Ahmad & Wasiq (2012) <sup>[1]</sup> has 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) <sup>[5]</sup> has done a study on social media experience of consumers and marketers. 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 'interest-ing', 'informative', 'interactive' and 'reliable'. Marketers should align their social media marketing effort with the changing tastes and preferences of customers.

Yadav (2012) <sup>[6]</sup> 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.

### 1.2 Study Objective & Methodology

The objective of this study is to know the state of social media marketing in India. How the Indian companies respond to this new media? This study provides significant facts and figures based on relevant research studies and literature. The study has

used secondary sources of information from last 5 years and it is an exploratory in nature.

### 1.3 Social Media

Social media is engagement with consumers online. According to Wikipedia, social media is Internet-based tools for sharing and discussing information among human beings. Social media is all about networking. Any website which allows user to share their content, opinions, views and encourages interaction and community building can be classified as a social media. Some popular social media sites are: Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Digg, My Space, Scribd, Flickr etc. The meaning of the term 'social media' can be derived from two words which constitute it. *Media* generally refers to advertising and the communication of ideas or information through publications or channels. *Social* implies the interaction of individuals within a group or community. Taken together, *social media* simply refers to communication or publication platforms which are generated and sustained by the interpersonal interaction of individuals through the specific medium or tool. Social media uses the "wisdom of crowds" to connect information in a collaborative manner. It represents low-cost tools that are used to combine technology and social interaction with the use of words. These tools are typically internet or mobile based like Twitter, Facebook, My Space and YouTube.

There are two benefits of social media that are important to businesses, they include:

1. Cost reduction by decreasing staff time.
2. Increase of probability of revenue generation.

Social media enables companies to:

- Share their expertise and knowledge.
- Tap into the wisdom of their consumers.
- Engage prospects through customer evangelism.

Thus the benefits of social media include: brand reach and awareness, consumer interactions through transactions, referrals and reputation management

### 1.4 Relevance of Social Media in Marketing

The role of social media in marketing is of a communication tool that makes the companies accessible to those interested in their product and makes them visible to those that don't know their product. It creates not only repeat-buyers, but customer loyalty. Fact is social media is so diversified that it can be used in whatever way it best suits the interest and the needs of the business. Social media gives marketers a voice and a way to communicate with peers, customers and potential consumers. It personalizes the "brand" and helps to spread the message in a relaxed and conversational way.

### 1.5 Role of Social Media in Marketing

Social media is now increasingly becoming an ingrained aspect of political campaigns, national defense strategies, public policy, public relations, brand management and even intra company communication. It plays various important roles in marketing:

- Social media can be used to provide an identity about the companies and the products or services that they offer.
- Social media helps in creating relationships with people who might not otherwise know about the products or service or what the companies represent.

### 1.6 Benefits of Social Media Marketing

Social Media Marketing (SMM) offers three distinct advantages:

- It provides a window to marketers to not only present products or services to customers but also to listen to customers' grievances and suggestions.
- It makes it easy for marketers to identify various peer groups or influencers among various groups, who in turn can become brand evangelist and help in organic growth of a brand.
- All this is done at nearly zero cost as most of the social networking sites are free.

### 1.7 Social media marketing helps in

- Generating exposure to businesses.
- Increasing traffic (subscribers).
- Building new business partnerships.
- Generating qualified leads due to better lead generation efforts.
- Selling more products and services.
- Reducing overall marketing expenses.

Companies in the west are investing increasingly in SMM to get in touch with their customers. They are indulging in constant interaction with their prospects in order to understand their needs and hence make products better.

### 1.8 Social Media Marketing Services

Social media marketing services helps the organization in enhancing the usability of the company's website using integration with social tools and application, improve site likability, allow easy sharing of site content on popular social sites, increase visibility on custom and niche search engines, easy tracking of updates on website; encouraging discussions on the site and a whole lot more. SMM Services helps positioning ones business on social networks to improve online brand visibility, brand protection, leads and sales generation and increase quality inbound links. Some of the major SMM Services are:

- Social media audit
- Social media optimization
- Optimized blog development, design, maintenance and promotion
- Brand management using social media monitoring
- Social media profile creation and management (Twitter, Face book, YouTube, etc.)
- Community building and monitoring
- LinkedIn Direct Ads
- Face book Advertisement
- Social bookmarking
- Social media distribution: leveraging social channels besides the regular channels to promote press releases and newsworthy content.

Everybody is a winner in the Social Media space, no doubt about it. But one thing that is to be remembered by the Brand Managers that average consumer is far more vocal today. He does not need to write a letter to the editor to voice his opinion. His voice is far stronger than what it is today. All he needs to do is sneeze which will create a viral effect. One blog on any platform can make or mar the image.

### 1.9 Why businesses need to consider Social media marketing services?

- **Size:** Facebook has over 250 million users globally. On an average, 70-100 Tweets happen by the second. An average user on Facebook has 120 friends. This is the Kind of enormity social networking sites espouse and with this comes the license to communicate powerfully.
- **Transparency:** Everything that happens in the social networking landscape is fool proof. Companies cannot fake.
- **Reach:** It is possible to reach globally to do it quickly using social networking sites.
- **Boost website traffic:** Social media is probably the fastest and easiest means of redirecting traffic to company's website. This is the virtual way version of "word-of-mouth".
- **Branding:** Buying a candy may have been impulsive all life, but if it is discussed on a social networking site, there is likely to get brand conscious even a candy. Social media is a smart way to build brands. Social media platforms are known to be one of the most powerful and fastest means of branding. Some of the big brands like Coke, Ford, Dell, IBM, Burger King have powerfully used social media platforms to endorse themselves.

### 1.10 Social media marketing strategies

SMM is still in its infancy. For an organization willing to invest in social media marketing, it is important to understand why SMM is an important marketing strategy and how it can help:

- This is the age of consumer satisfaction. It is not about selling but it is more about interacting. There is a lot to learn from the customers. Using social media one can identify customers, listen to their feedback and use them to improve and innovate on products or services.
- SMM is not a mass advertising strategy. It can be used to identify peer groups and advertise to that particular group. Social Media can help in identifying influencers and through them one can guide a prospective customer into making a purchase.
- SMM calls for novel advertising methods as the attention span of online *junta* is very low. This is largely due to the multitasking phenomena.
- Similarly social media can be used to increase customer loyalty through customer support services and hence improve customer retention.
- SMM can also be used by brands to ward off any negative publicity.

Companies using traditional marketing methods (e.g. surveys, focus groups, test marketing) often spend millions to locate their target markets. Establishing a social media strategy helps them see where potential customers are hanging out. Social media gives businesses on small budgets and the ability to find out what people are saying about them (and others) in their industry, without paying large sums on market research.

### 2. Conclusion

There is no way to escape from social media these days, either for individuals or for businesses. Today, it is impossible to separate social media from the online world. It is imperative to understand that today, social media have exponential potential. They are part of an ever-growing online network of people who

discuss, comment, participate, share and create. Whether an individual, a startup, small business or a large corporation, an online presence and an ongoing conversation with other constituents is a baseline requirement and will take time and expertise. Companies are diverting resources and rethinking their traditional outreach strategies. And as the social media wave dissipates into the vast ocean of connected experiences, the term itself has become an entry in dictionaries and encyclopedias and we will embark on a new era of knowledge, accessibility and experiences unbound by distance, time or physical walls. It is high time that every business adopts social media and takes it seriously.

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