SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING IN INDIA

Mr.M.Marimuthu[1]

[1]Assistant Professor of Commerce, Sriram College of Arts and Science, Perumalpattu, Thiruvallur, Tamil Nadu, India.

Dr.C.Vijai[2]

[2]Assistant Professor of Commerce, Sriram College of Arts and Science, Perumalpattu, Thiruvallur, Tamil Nadu, India.

ABSTRACT

Social media has risen to a great level in India since last few years. Marketers in the west have already taken advantage of Social Media. But Indian marketers are still lagging behind in this foray. According to a survey done by DEI Worldwide in 2008, among US consumers, "companies not engaging in social media as part of their online marketing strategy are missing an opportunity to reach consumers". Social Media Marketing is emerging as an innovation in the marketing field. In India SMM is catching fire since last 3 to 4 years. But still some companies are finding ways and means to manage it professionally. Hence, the need arise to study the state of social media use in marketing activities by Indian companies. By scouting the secondary data this study presents the state of social media marketing in India.

KEYWORDS: *Social Media, Social Media Marketing, Social Media Platforms. India.*

INTRODUCTION

Social media marketing refers to the process of gaining website traffic or attention through social media sites. Social media marketing programs usually center on efforts to create content that attracts attention and encourages readers to share it with their social networks. A corporate message spreads from user to user and presumably resonates because it appears to come from a trusted, third-party source, as opposed to the brand or company itself.[citation needed] Hence, this form of marketing is driven by word-of-mouth, meaning it results in earned media rather than paid media.

Social media has become a platform that is easily accessible to anyone with internet access. Increased communication for organizations fosters brand awareness and often, improved customer service. Additionally, social media serves as a relatively inexpensive platform for organizations to implement marketing campaigns.

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

Social media is a collection of online platforms and tools that people use to share content, profiles, opinions, insights, experiences, perspectives and media itself, facilitating conversations and interactions online between groups of people.

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. To unravel research question of this study, it provides all major facts, figures, major research findings.

METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION:

Various information has been collected by referring books, journals, newspaper articles, research reports, dissertations, research papers, websites, online journals and articles.

Figure 1. Social media marketing

IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

The importance of social media is unbeatable. It is a powerful channel of marketing — a game changer for any business. It provides us the flexibility to communicate at both personal as well as business levels. Business owners can improve search rankings, leads, sales, and traffic using search media. This can be done at reduced marketing expenses. Besides business, it is a cool platform to connect with friends and dear ones.

SOCIAL MEDIA CONCEPT

Previously, activities of users on the Internet were limited to reading and shopping; however, advanced Internet technologies have brought a new dimension to these activities. Now users can create content and share it without the need for technical expertise. This new internet concept that is based on interactivity and communication, and makes the rapid and free sharing of information possible, is called "Web 2.0". The Web 2.0 concept refers to second generation internet based web services; namely, social networking environments, web based encyclopedias, forums, podcasts and other environments where online sharing is possible. For many people, Web 2.0 is a concept representing technologies that makes our lives easier such as blogs, wikis, podcasts and RSS. These technologies socialize the internet (Hay, 2009). Web 2.0 is a catalyst that reflects and accelerates changes in technology and society. By means of this innovation, consumers can give feedback and share their ideas with others. In today's world, individuals are free to make their own choices and decisions based on the information presented to them. This situation changes the methods that businesses use to communicate with consumers. In the past, companies could decide the image presented to consumers. However, they have lost this control with the arrival of Web 2.0. Today, companies must be in constant contact with consumers in order to control their image. In this way, anyone using the internet is included in a bilateral communication process. Pursuant to the Web 2.0 concept, the social media concept was created. The beginning of social media came in the form of offering Web 2.0 to the general public. Social media is a media system that turns unilateral information sharing into a bilateral and simultaneous one with the public offering of Web 2.0. The term, social media, was used for the first time by Chris Shipley, the co-founder of San Francisco based Guidewire Group.

This concept includes all tools enabling online communication and information and supporting participation and cooperation. Innovations such as corporate and personal blogs, professional and social networks, cyber worlds, and social bookmarking, can be counted within the social media category. YouTube, Twitter, Linkedin and Facebook, known by almost everyone today, are the most important components of social media. Social networks create environments that can facilitate communication within the business

world or can bring individuals with common interests together. In other words, social media is the common name of online tools through which people share their point of view. While some people create content, others search on, investigate and disseminate this content. Social media is (Akar, 2010) based on connections between relationships, people and organizations. Social media is generally defined as, " Web 2.0 based sites which bring different people together in a virtual platform and ensure a deeper social interaction, stronger community and implementation of cooperation projects" (Brown, 2009).The most frequently used definition for social media is "online platforms that people use to share their ideas, experiences, perspectives and communicate with each other" (Kahraman, 2010) According to Weber (2009), social media is "online environments where people with common interest share their ideas and comments.

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING IN INDIA - AN OVERVIEW

India has 71 million active internet users. Social Media is really picking up new heights in India. According to the 2010 Regus Global Survey of business social networking, India tops the usage of social networking by business – it has the highest activity index, 127, far more than the US'97, and 52% of the Indian respondent companies said that they had acquired new customers using social networks while 35% American companies managed that. Many companies are coming big way for Social Media Optimization for their Product or Services nowadays. During Election 2009 Social Media was used for Influence Indian Voters. Social Media Marketing in India is being undertaken by brands like Tata Docomo, MTV India, Channel V, Clear Trip, Tata Photon, Axe deodorants, Microsoft, Naukri, Shaadi and many more. Besides, numerous Indian celebrities are also using SMM platform to promote their movies, music and events via Twitter, Facebook and personalized blogs. Social Media Marketing is also boosting public relations business. Several PR agencies in India are undertaking brand building exercises for corporate organizations, brands and celebrities. However, to the delight of many among us, the biggest gainers from SMM till date have been the organizations from the Not-for Profit sector. Several Campaigns like 'Bell Bajao' and 'Jaago Re' have been quite successful onSocial Networking Sites. These campaigns have been spreading the word about their cause through blogs, Twitter and Facebook
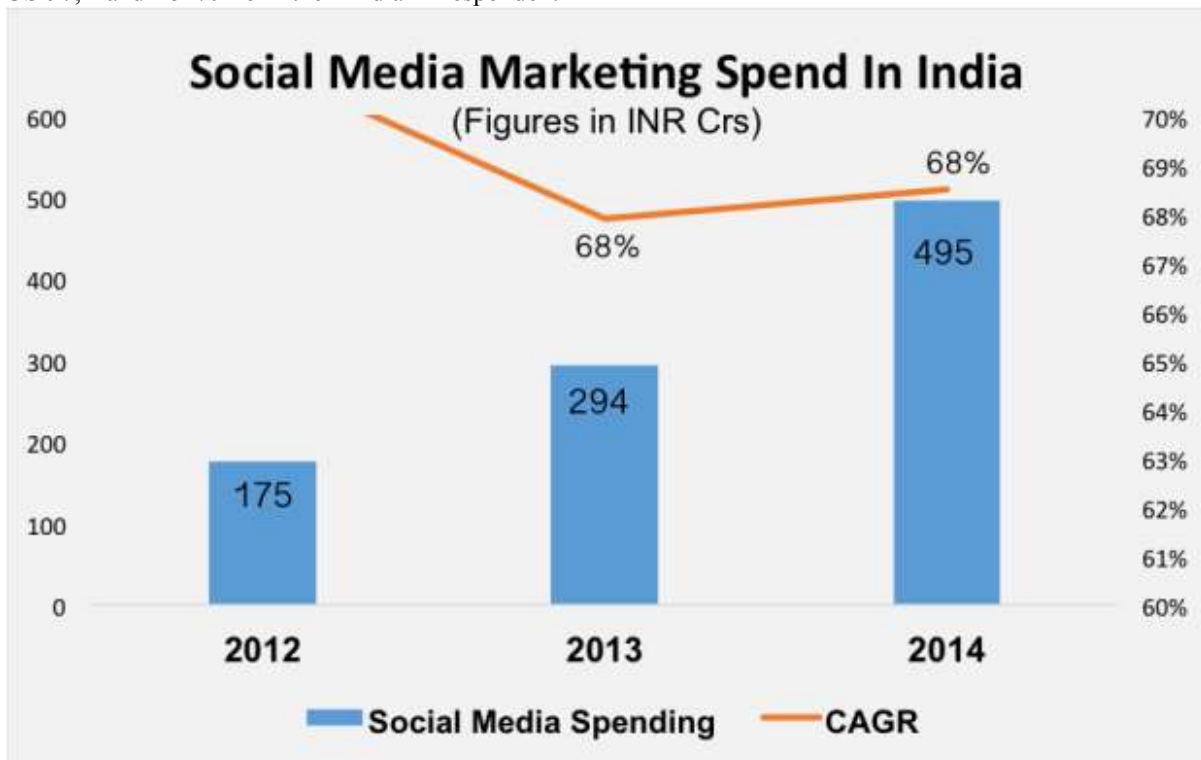
UNDERSTANDING THE RELEVANCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN MARKETING:

The role of social media in marketing is to use it as 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 should be used as a tool that creates a personality behind their brand and creates relationships that they otherwise may never gain. This creates not only repeat-buyers, but customer loyalty. Fact is social media is so diversified that it can be used in whatever way best suits the interest and the needs of the business.

According to 2010 Social Media Marketing Industry Report 2010, a majority of marketers (56%) are using social media for 6 hours or more each week, and nearly one in three invest 11 or more hours weekly. Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and blogs were the top four social media tools used by marketers, in order. A significant 81% of marketers plan on increasing their use of blogs. A majority of the marketers are employing social media for marketing purposes and small businesses were slightly more likely to use social media. 76% of marketers are spending at least 4 hours each week on their social media marketing efforts. In the present context, it is increasingly becoming pertinent for companies to (1) build a favorable base of consumers, and (2) involve them in decision making.

According to Soft-pedal, during the last quarter of 2009, 86 percent of online retailers in US had a Facebook page. It was expected that this figure would reach 99 percent very soon. During this same period, e-marketer pointed that 65percent of its surveyed online retailers were active on Twitter. Another 26 percent were planning to incorporate Twitter in their plans. E-marketer projects that by 2011, 91 percent of online retailers will be Twitter ready and all of them will have a Facebook page. Presently, greater than 700 thousands businesses have an active Facebook page. And around 80 thousand web portals are Facebook Connected presently.Social media gives marketers a voice and a way to communicate with peers, customers and potential consumers. It personalizes the "brand" and helps you to spread the message in a relaxed and conversational way.

ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN MARKETING

Social media is now increasingly becoming an ingrained aspect of political campaigns, national defensestrategies, public policy, public relations, brand management and even intra company communication. Since the major task of marketing as tool used to inform consumers about the company's products, who they are and what they offer, social marketing plays an important role 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.
- Social media makes companies "real" to consumers. If they want people to follow them they need not just talk about the latest product news, but share their personality with them.
- Social media can be used to associate themselves with their peers that may be serving the same target market.
- Social media can be used to communicate and provide the interaction that consumers look for.

SMM SERVICES

Social Media Marketing Services are the services which 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 (Technorati etc.); easy tracking of updates on your website; encouraging discussions on the site and a whole lot more. SMM Services helps positioning one's business on social networks to improve online brand visibility, brand protection / reputation management, leads and /or 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, Facebook, YouTube, etc.)
- Community building and monitoring
- LinkedIn Direct Ads
- Facebook Advertisement
- Social bookmarking

BENEFITS OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

The benefits to marketing via social networks are numerous and largely gained at a very low cost. Through social networks, the company can:

- Increase product and brand awareness
- Increase web traffic
- Increase customer loyalty
- Increase success of new product launches

Increase Product & Brand Awareness

Marketing on social networking sites will increase awareness by increasing the online presence of your products and brand. When the company creates a group or organizes a promotion on a social networking site, the members are reminded of your brand and website with every interaction. Since the customers are deciding what groups they want to join and what information they want to receive, this information is usually positively received.

Increase Web Traffic

Communications, recommendations, and other postings on social networking sites often contain web links. If the company is mentioned and a link is included, these postings drive traffic to your site, increasing brand and product awareness. Due to the makeup of social networking sites, these links are naturally targeted to potential customers that are interested in the company, products, or services

Increase Customer Loyalty

If done correctly, promoting the company or products by building a social network can greatly enhance customer loyalty. If participation of the company is consistent and honest, adds value by supplying useful content, and appears personal, it will greatly enhance company s reputation while building trust and credibility. Offer help first, and promote products only when asked and when appropriate; otherwise your attempts could be considered spam.

Increase Success of New Product Launches

Social networks provide a unique opportunity to survey the relevant community on their products wants and needs. The community can guide and participate in the product development process. Giving them a voice in the process can increase loyalty and guarantee success when a new product is launched. Users of social networking sites profile themselves upon joining a network. These profiles can be very detailed, and their purpose is to help the user connect with others who share similar interests and activities. The profiles contain, not only basic information about the user, but also information on their education, areas of technical expertisepublications, memberships in other groups, geographic location, and job position (among other information). For marketers, this information is invaluable as it can be used to develop highly targeted marketing messages.

SOCIAL MEDIA WEBSITES

1. Social networking sites- Facebook, Google Plus, CafeMom, Gather, Fitsugar
2. Interact by adding friends, commenting on profiles, joining groups and having
  Discussions.
3. Micro-blogging sites- Twitter, Tumblr, Posterous
4. Publishing tools- WordPress, Blogger, Squarespace
5. Collaboration tools- Wikipedia, WikiTravel, WikiBooks
6. Rating/Review sites- Amazon ratings, Angie's List
7. Photo sharing sites- Flikr, Instagram, Pinterest
8. Video sharing sites- YouTube, Vimeo, Viddler
9. Personal broadcasting tools- Blog Talk radio, Ustream, Livestream
10. Virtual worlds- Second Life, World of Warcraft, Farmville
11. Location based services- Check-ins, Facebook Places, Foursquare, Yelp
12. Widgets- Profile badges, Like buttons
13. Social bookmarking and news aggregation- Digg, Delicious
14. Interact by voting for articles and commenting on them. Interact by tagging
  Websites and
15. Searching through websites bookmarked by other people.
16. Group buying- Groupon, Living Social, Crowd savings

THERE ARE SOME MOST POPULAR METHODS OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

Blogging

When person starts blogging or posting data about any product, later it can become big business via blog. Websites and blogs are most powerful tools for social network marketing when matched with other networking tools. Blog is an amazing tool which provides many other facilities in addition to just marketing business. It also helps to communicate with other clients in case of any problems. Very effective can be to combine social media with article marketing and blogging, for example, creating links back to landing pages and get maximum exposure for products. There are many article directories that allow for free article submission. Each article should beunique. Blogging is also very popular for creating brand. As with anything it is important to make sure that brand stands out from the rest.

Personal website or blog

It is important to have private which will help clients to know about the company and it will make them clear that the company has a serious business and help to make huge revenue via online marketing.

Article selling

It is also best and cheap internet marketing method. It is a mode of advertising trade just by writing articles and attracting endless number of users across world. Today it provided free business to many advertisers and publishers and they are really benefited through their articles.

Email sending

Electronic mail sending is the best way to marketing. The best way is to collect list of email addresses through portfolio websites and email about business to all internet users. Email should be attractive in such a way that recipient will be impressed to get back to you. It is also difficult to tread that fine line between spam and building up a social media audience. If individuals are contacted purely to make money then the company is sending out spam. This is a very unprofitable way to go about marketing.

Using social networking websites

Social networking websites like Twitter and Facebook can be used to promote sales. These provide best platform for all who are thinking of online marketing.

Video promotion

In social media particularly video marketing can also be very effective. Millions of Internet users look at videos every day. A short video about your services and products can reach millions of potential customers. Several video distribution websites is very important for marketing. These websites uploads service to the whole world. All that is needed to do is film a video about marketing and send it to video uploading sites like You Tube. It seems it is the easiest way of marketing than any other modes since many people will be interested in view videos rather than word form of advertisement.

CONCLUSION

Social platforms each have an ecosystem of their own. Creating a basic social media presence is easy enough, getting your community to actually do something is more difficult. Make sure your site is included in local business directories in order to help ensure that consumers find you when they need you. Customizing messages across sites help the message spread but it keeps users from receiving multiple identical communications. By giving exclusive coupons to your social community, you're rewarding and reminding them that you are not only a brand to engage with, but also to buy from. Taking advantage of these strategies can help you build your community, make your marketing more effective, and incentivize buying.

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