

An Empirical Study on Effectiveness of Social Media as a Marketing Tool

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Abstract - Social media allows individual to interact with one another and build relationships. When companies join the social channels, consumers can interact with them and they can communicate with consumers directly. Social media revolution, it is more than obvious that social media like Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, Skype etc., are used extensively for the purpose of communication. One of the most important advantages of the use of social media is the online sharing of knowledge and information among the different groups of people. It is practically impossible to design a marketing strategy without considering social networks. Social media has become really important in today's marketing mix in general and in promoting the new product and existing on in particular. The paper carries out empirical research to understand the effectiveness of social media as a marketing tool.

Key words: Social media, Marketing

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INTRODUCTION

Social media is all about people to express and share ideas. It is a two-way form of communication that allows users to communicate with the information being transmitted. Social media is using not only for interaction with friends or family, but also, increasingly for companies looking to discover the value that social media can add to their marketing operations. In today's technology driven world, social networking sites have become an avenue where retailers can extend their marketing campaigns to a wider range of consumers. Chi (2011, 46) defines social media marketing as a "connection between brands and consumers, [while] offering a personal channel and currency for user centered networking and social interaction." The tools and approaches for communicating with customers have changed greatly with the emergence of social media; therefore, businesses must learn how to use social media in a way that is consistent with their business plan (Mangold and Faulds 2009). This is especially true for companies striving to gain a competitive advantage businesses can significantly increase the public awareness of their products and services through social media. The benefits of social media include providing news about current events,

encouraging professional networking and allowing family members to stay in touch with each other and also helps businesses to increase sales and improve customer service. Because of the way the content is shared and distributed on social media platforms, businesses can significantly increase their public awareness of their products and services. Actively using social media is one of the easiest ways to reach a large audience and get the company or brand name in the heads of existing or potential customers.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Social media gained rapid prominence within few years of its existence. Social media, today, is among the 'best opportunities available' to a brand for connecting with prospective customers it has proven to be just as effective as or even more effective than traditional marketing. This study is intended to know the social media usage among the youth, examine the extent social media helps consumers in purchasing decisions and to study the consumer expectation.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 1) To study the social media usage among youth.
- 2) To examine, the extent, social media helps consumers in purchasing decisions. Decisions and to study the consumer expectation.

DATA SOURCE AND COLLECTION

The data for the study is collected through primary as well as secondary data source. The primary data is collected using questionnaire directly from the respondents and also by mailing the questionnaire. And the secondary data from printed magazines and journals. The collection of secondary data is also from various sites of internet.

SAMPLE SELECTION

Sample of 60 respondents were selected by convenience sampling method .sample is collected from Kottayam district in Kerala state.

TOOLS FOR ANALYSIS

For the purpose of analysis of data suitable statistical and mathematical tools are used. For the pictorial representation of various tables bar diagrams and pie charts have been used in the study.

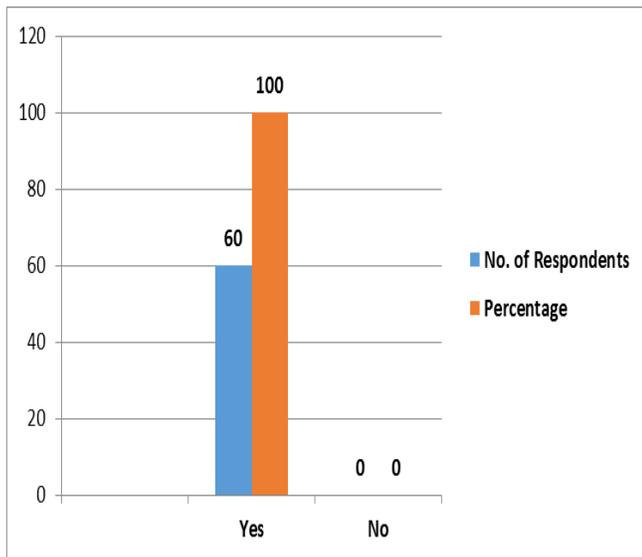
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Di Pietro and Pantano (2012) conducted research and identified that enjoyment is the major factor that influences consumers to use social networks as a platform for assisting in their buying decisions. They found that the fun provided by facebook, as well as the opportunity it provides users to ask for suggestions in an easy and entertaining way motivates individuals to pay more attention to the products promoted on facebook

Shankar (2011) in his study stated that social media has advanced from simply providing a platform for individuals to stay in touch with their family and friends. Now it is a place where consumers can learn more about their favorite companies and the products they sell. Marketers and retailers are utilizing these sites as another way to reach to consumers and provide a new way to shop.

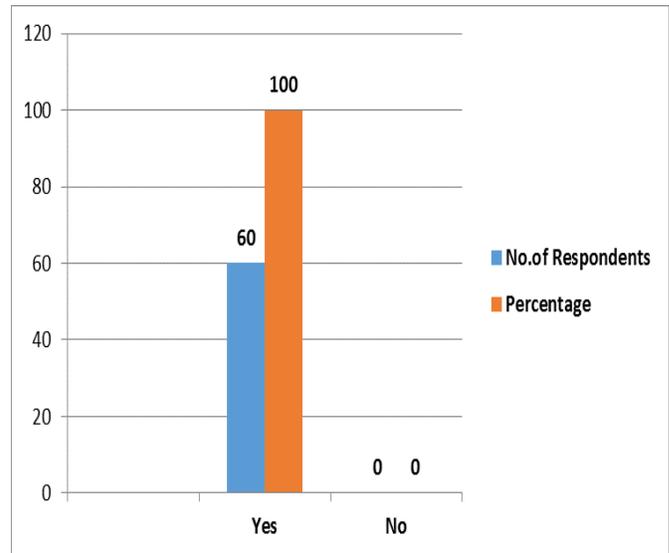
DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

1. Diagram one showing internet accessibility



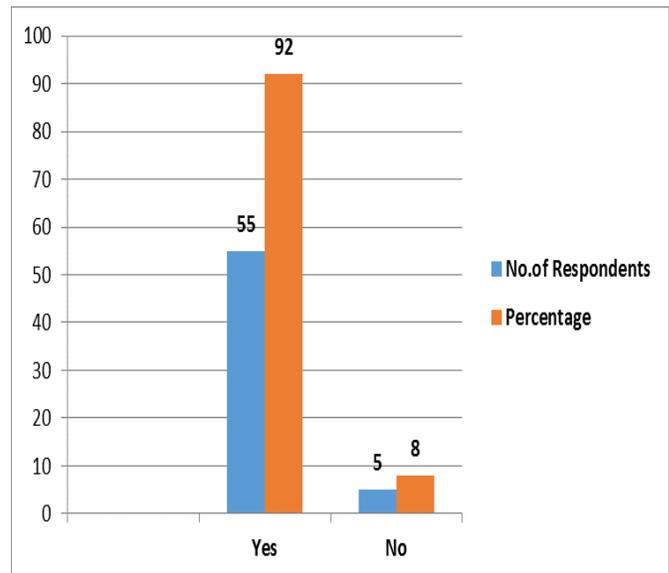
As per the diagram all of the 60 respondents have internet accessibility. In spite of age and gender all of the respondents have internet accessibility due to modernization, globalization and digitalization.

2. Diagram two showing social media usage among the respondents.



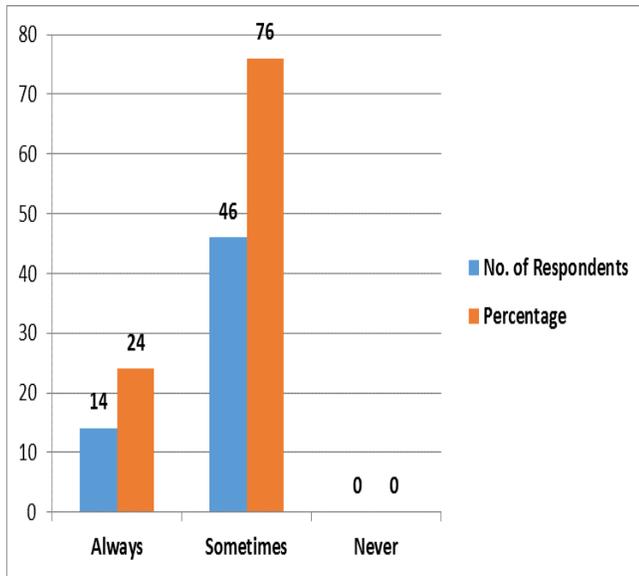
It depicts that all of the 60 respondents (100%) use social media networks. None of the respondents give the answer as 'No'. Because of the growth of the technology and all the people have access to internet usage of social media

3. Diagram three showing the importance of social media



In this case, 55 (92%) out of the total 60 respondents says that social media is important for them. Balance of the respondents, 5 (8%) responds that social media has not much importance in their life.

4. Diagram four shows use of social media sites for buying products



It is evident that all of the 60 respondents use social Medias at least once in their lifetime for buying a product. Among 60 respondents, 46 (76%) respondents are sometimes using social media for buying a product. While the balance 14 (24%) are always using social media sites for buying a product.

5. Diagram five shows influence in changing perception about a product.

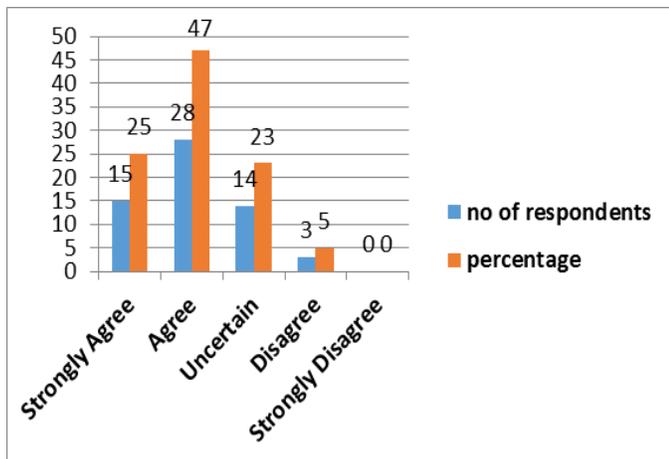


Table states that influence of social media in changing one's perception about a product. It is evident that 47% respondents agree that the social media could change one's perception about a product, followed by 25% strongly agree the

statement. While 23% are uncertain about whether social media could change one's perception about a product.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

1. In spite of age and gender all the 60 respondents have internet accessibility due to modernization, globalization and digitalization.
2. All of the 60 respondents use social media networks. Because of the growth of the technology all the respondents have access to internet usage of social media network is also high.
3. Next finding is how important social media in the life of respondents. In this case, 55 (92 percent) out of the total 60 respondents says that social media is important for them. Balance of the respondents, 5(8 percent) say that social media has not much importance in their life.
4. All of the 60 respondents use social Medias at least once in their lifetime for buying a product. Among 60 respondents, 46(76 percent) respondents use social media sometimes for buying a product.
5. 48 percent respondents agree that the social media could change one's perception about a product, followed by 25 percent strongly agree the statement. So it is evident that social media could change one's perception about a product.
6. It is evident that 47% respondents agree that the social media could change one's perception about a product, followed by 25% strongly agree the statement. While 23% are uncertain about whether social media could change one's perception about a product.

CONCLUSION

Results from the analysis indicate that social media is a very important tool for networking among youngsters. Youths are increasingly using these websites to stay connected with their friends and family. Social media is also used as a marketing tool in creating brand awareness and brand preference among the consumers. Social media is the cheapest medium for seeking information. Hence it is widely used by majority of customers for evaluations of brands and products. There is an increasing trend among the youngsters to buy products online through these social networking sites. Marketers have realized the importance of social media website as an essential component of integrated marketing communications. Every company aims to have their presence in these websites for the sheer reach to the target customers. Companies with their promotional strategies advertise their brands on social media websites so as to influence the brand preference among the youth. It also encourages constant interaction with the customers, gaining an insight on their likes and preferences and problems associated with the product. this helps the companies to take corrective measures in a timely manner and modify their products as per customer needs. It can be used as

a growing platform for launching new products. This ultimately leads to higher sales and helps in increasing the market share of the product.

When talking about all the advantages, some are not satisfied because of the problems related with quality, design, color, material composition etc. If the problems are solved effectively, marketing through social media can become a successful one. So more efforts must be taken by the companies in order to promote their products/services/brand through social networking sites to create a good image in the minds of the customers.

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