

Social Media and Marketing**Mansi Bansal¹, Nidhi Bansal²**

Mansi Bansal, Assistant Professor, SGTB Khalsa College, Delhi University, E-mail: mansibansal25@yahoo.co.in

NidhiBansal, Assistant Professor, Atma Ram Sanatan Dharma College, Delhi University, Email: nidhi_arsd@yahoo.co.in

Abstract

Given the busy schedules, pressure to meet work deadlines, huge traffic jams on roads have resulted in less preference of people to go out. But every human existence needs certain basic essentials to survive like groceries, paying bills, clothes and other essential stuff. The online commerce which had already started picking up in the country given the convenience factor has suddenly become the new shopping destination. People like only to do market survey but also buy the product/services, from the comfort zones of their homes. Every business to survive and compete, needs to advertise and market its products. The traditional channels like print media, hoardings, electronic media seems to have lost their significance in the current times. Now everybody be it children, adults or old people all of them are connected and making use intensive use of social media. The paper explores the significance of social media in promoting e-commerce.

Introduction

In today's globalised era technology has become an indispensable part of every activity in supply chain management. Latest forms of technology are adopted by both businesses and consumers to indulge in two way interaction. Latest technology is helping the business not only with better promotion and advertisement but also enabling it to explore new ways of selling its products and services. One such way is online commerce also referred to as electronic commerce.

Electronic commerce is defined as exchange performed by a consumer via a computer-based interface, where the consumer's computer is connected to, and can interact with a retailer's digital storefront to purchase the products or services over the internet.

Social Media refers to websites and applications that enable users to develop and share content or to participate in social networking. Social media are interactive Web

2.0 Internet-based applications which allows users to develop dynamic and interactive content. These social media sites allows users to interact, to share information, to share pictures and videos, to connect with a group of friends or community at large. Examples of some of the popular social media sites are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, YouTube and many others. Now a days not only individuals but every company has their own social networking sites where current and prospective customers can indulge in dialogue and conversation with each other.

Objectives

The study is carried out with the following objectives:

- 1) To understand the importance of e-Commerce in India;
- 2) To understand the various types of social media platform;
- 3) To comprehend the use of social media in promoting e-commerce;
- 4) To assess the advantages and disadvantages of social media marketing.

E-Commerce In India- The Changing Paradigm

Today internet and e-commerce have changed the way products and services are purchased and sold. People sitting from their home can order anything from pin to aeroplane through e-commerce sites. These e-commerce sites have brought many benefits to small and medium sellers who find it easier to sell online than opening their own showroom. These e-commerce sites in an attempt to cater to more customers have also introduced the feature of cash on delivery besides online payment mode. To further increase the acceptability return policy is also good and very fast. All these features have led to growth in online business but it is still at nascent stage in India. But the future estimates project a very optimistic and rosy picture. Also now people are more logged onto their smart phones rather than television and newspapers so the businesses also have to think out of box for their marketing activities. They have to focus more on social media marketing.

Types of Social Media Platforms

There are number of social media websites and applications. Some of the very popular are:

1. Facebook
2. Instagram
3. Twitter

4. LinkedIn
5. YouTube
6. WhatsApp

Facebook: Facebook is a networking site with huge number of users. Anyone above 14 years of age can create a Facebook page. Facebook allows user to interact with a selected group of friends or community at large. Its' not only the individual that create the account but the business whether small or large also create their Facebook page to stay connected with their customers. To top it all it is totally free platform. There are no charges to create or maintain the Facebook account.

Instagram: Instagram is a social media platform that is more visual in nature. Individuals, celebrities and company's post pictures of their activities, products to keep their followers engaged.

Twitter: Twitter is a platform where one can express one's views with short text messages along with other media. Twitter is gaining popularity over Facebook as more formal medium of networking. Almost all politicians now have twitter accounts and they interact with their followers through their posts on twitter also referred to as tweets. Company's also use twitter handles to generate campaigns and address customer queries. Now people are using twitter quite a lot to generate awareness and garner support for various social issues.

LinkedIn: LinkedIn is a social networking site that is basically used for professional purposes. People create their LinkedIn profile listing their skill set and core competencies. It is way for prospective employer and employee to connect with each other.

YouTube: YouTube is the immensely popular video -sharing platform which gives the users option to upload their videos besides viewing the videos posted by others. Users can also like, share and comment on the videos of others. Individuals and companies create their own YouTube channels to stay connected with their subscribers.

WhatsApp: This is a medium for social networking through group or individual chat. It allows sharing of text, pictures and videos. WhatsApplet users create a group of people through create group feature. However this is not considered formal medium of communication for a company, like Twitter and Instagram.

Use of Social Media in Promoting E-Commerce

Now a days people are always connected to internet through smartphones. Earlier it was not so convenient through laptop. But now with smartphone people are connected to their social networking profiles 24*7. Companies spend a lot on advertising and marketing so as to create as well as retain existing customer. If the company advertises on traditional platforms like electronic and print media, it may not get full attention of the customer. Customer may be doing some other work alongside watching TV. So a advertisement may not leave the desired impact on customers. Also while watching TV customer may be talking to family members so the effect is diluted. On the other hand while watching the advertisements on their Facebook page or YouTube, customers watches them with greater concentration and in their free time so the impact is more. Every company wants maximum Return on Investments on the amount spent on advertisements. Now a days company is able to achieve a higher ROI through social media platforms.

Benefits of Social Media Marketing

Presence on social media offers number of marketing opportunities to the business. Some of them are:-

- i. **Brand Awareness:** Having a presence on social media makes it easier for both existing and potential customers to find and connect with the brand. When an existing customer engages in an conversation with the company, that can be seen by all the followers of that individual. This way company is able to reach larger group and thus create brand awareness.
- ii. **Brand Loyalty:** Social media provides the companies opportunities to have a constant and continuous interaction and conversation with the customers. If a company is able to retain customers attention then surely customers starts feeling associated with the company and hence company enjoys the benefit of enhanced brand loyalty.
- iii. **Increased Website Traffic:** Social media expands company's outlets for attracting inbound traffic to its website. Every social profile that a company have is a potential path to its website and each post is a new opportunity to provide value and show visitors and followers why they should visit company's website. Ultimately, these visits can result in more leads and conversions.

- iv. **Customer Insights:** A huge amount of data about the customer is generated when the company engages with customer. This data can be analyzed by the company to know the customers spending pattern, their belief system, their preferences, their friends and peer group. This all can help a company gain competitive advantage over their competitors.
- v. **Customer Experience:** Customers find it a lot easier to connect with the company through social media rather than customer care or the helpline number. Also the companies are quick to respond, as entire conversation is in public domain. By addressing the customers concerns quickly company can create a satisfied customer.

Disadvantages of Social Media Marketing

- i. **Negative Feedback:** People love to share their good or bad experiences on social media. If a customer is unsatisfied or had a bad experience they are very fast to share it on their own social networking profiles and also tag company's social profiles. This way post reaches thousands of prospective customers in a fraction of seconds. All the people who follow individual's social profile and company's profile get to read that negative experience. This may have very bad impact on first time customers. Reading negative experience of one customer though it may be exaggerated, pushes away the present and prospective customers.
- ii. **May Backfire :** To engage the customer and create their goodwill, companies keep on posting on relevant social and economic issues. Sometimes these posts may create a negative publicity for the company. Instead of creating brand loyalty, people may start trending #boycott. There have been instances where companies had to render public apologies.
- iii. **Consumes Lot of Time:** Social media is not a one time job, like company can run a campaign and take a break. A company has to be constantly active on their social pages. Company should be quick to respond to customer's grievances and queries. Also a company has to be constantly aware to catch any negative thing before it becomes controversy. All this consumes lot of time.

Conclusion

There are some disadvantages of social media platform but every potential and strong medium has few disadvantages along with many benefits. The advantages that social media

marketing offers for e-commerce outweighs the disadvantages. So it's for the company to use this medium effectively to promote their commercial and awareness activities.

References

Ernst & Young (2001).The Annual Ernst & Young Internet Shopping Study: The Digital Channel Continues to Gather Steam”, Washington, D. C.

Sultan, F., &Henrichs, R.B. (2000).Consumer Preferences for Internet Services Over Time: Initial Explorations. *The Journal of Consumer Marketing*, Vol. 17, No. 5, 386-403.

SujanaAdapa (2008). Adoption of Internet Shopping: Cultural Considerations in India and Australia. *Journal of Internet Banking and Commerce*, Vol. 13, no.2.