

Social Media – An Opportunity for Organisations

Sarita Sharma

Research Scholar, PCJ School of Management, Maharaja Agrasen University, Baddi, Distt- Solan, Himachal Pradesh, India

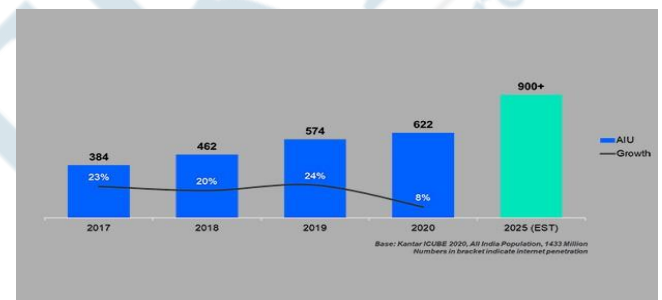
Abstract— Social media is used by billions of people around the world and has fast become one of the defining technologies over time. Globally, the total number of social media users is estimated to grow to 3.29 billion users in 2022, which will be 42.3% of the world’s population (eMarketer 2018). Given the massive potential audience available who are spending many hours a day using social media across the various platforms, it is not surprising that marketers have included social media as a marketing channel for their integrated modern marketing campaigns. Online Marketing has created new opportunities for businesses to come in contact with their customers, business partners, and suppliers in unique ways and also to improve their internal operations. Effective use of social media can bring great opportunities for businesses, but will require some thought and planning. The present paper throws light on the opportunities and challenges available to organisations with the use of various media tools and websites.

Index Terms— Media Tools, Modern Marketing, Online Marketing, Social Media

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media is defined as a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations and allow the creation and exchange of user generated content (Kaplan and Heinlein). Social media help consumers to share text, images, audio, and video information with each other and with companies and vice versa. Social media allow marketers to establish a contact with public and allows to show their presence on the web. The popularity of social media for marketing purposes can be attributed to a number of benefits associated with social media as compared to traditional marketing channels. According to the recent studies, companies recognized the importance and role of social media marketing and planned to increase social media budgets for next 5 years. It is a best medium to convey information easily and effectively online. From last 7 or 8 years we have seen a sudden increase and progression on Social Media sites. Presently the most diversified Social media networks are Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and LinkedIn etc. India is World's 7th largest in Internet Market and there are 21 million people in India who are estimated to visit social media sites regularly which is 60.3% of the total active Indian Internet audience. More than 90% of Indian online users belong to 18-45 age group which has high purchase power and high disposable income. The social media websites in India are growing by almost 100% year after year.

Internet Penetration & Audience



Source: Internet & Mobile Association of India (IAMAI)

According to IMAI Kantar ICUBE 2020 Report, India is likely to have 900 million active Internet users by 2025 as against around 622 million as of 2020, registering a growth of about 45% in the next five years.

The report suggests that even though the Internet penetration in urban is more than 2X that of rural, usership in rural has been growing at a faster rate on a year-on-year basis. While internet users grew by 4% in urban India -- reaching 323 million users (67% of urban population) in 2020, digital adoption continues to be propelled by rural India – clocking a 13% growth to 299 million internet users (31% of rural population) over the past year. This indicates that there’s a lot of headroom for growth in rural India and this would help in bridging the urban-rural digital divide. However, the growth rate of AIU (those who have accessed internet in the last one month) has progressively reduced over the years and is the lowest in the last four years.

It also finds that nine out of ten active internet users access the internet every day; On average, they spend around 107 minutes (1.8 hours) actively on the internet daily. Though the proportion of daily users is marginally higher in urban India as compared to rural India, AIU in urban India is spending 17% more time as compared to rural India. The number of internet users had increased over the years in rural as well as urban areas. India had 560 million active Internet users in the

year 2019. India is the second-largest online market, behind China. It is estimated that by 2021, there will be around 636 million active internet users in India. With the ease of internet access, the number of active social media users in India stood at 310 million in January 2019 and by 2023 it is expected to reach 448 million.

Few Popular Social Media Networks

Facebook - Marketing campaigns on Facebook can make the social presence of an organisation more visible. It consists of integrated Facebook advertising campaign, Facebook application development, page design, paid advertising, viral marketing etc.

Twitter - Twitter provides innovative marketing services which can help to increase the followers of a business and make its products and services more noticeable in several social media platforms. It provides an interaction of the business with millions of users at a time.

LinkedIn - LinkedIn services helps the business to secure a link with its targeted audience. The innovations in marketing strategies can make the business popular among people.

Google+ and You Tube Marketing - Google+ and YouTube offers an exciting opportunity by which any organization can competently promote their business. Businesses promote the services and products of their clients by using these networking platforms and improve their brand equity online.








Instagram - Instagram is a visual platform that helps businesses for a more personal connect with customers and differentiate their products with that of the competitors. Organisations can use Instagram stories to offer discounts and run flash sales.

Quora - This is a question-answer platform that allows users to ask and answer questions related to any topic or industry. Business organisations can directly communicate with their audience and check for their competitors.

Pinterest - It helps people find creative ideas and emerging trends for their businesses.

The content of Pinterest has evergreen value because its content has a longer shelf life.

Top Social Networking Sites In India

Social Networking Site	Monthly Visits	Mobile Traffic Share	Desktop Traffic share
Facebook 	1.6 Billion	99.25%	0.75%
YouTube 	1.2 Billion	59.96%	40.04%
Quora 	215.8 Million	98.89%	1.11%
Instagram 	191.1 Million	99.02%	0.98%
Twitter 	125.2 Million	97.81%	2.19%
Pinterest 	49.8 Million	98.40%	1.60%
LinkedIn 	29.9 Million	90.97%	9.03%

Source: Internet & Mobile Association of India (IAMAI)

2.OBJECTIVES

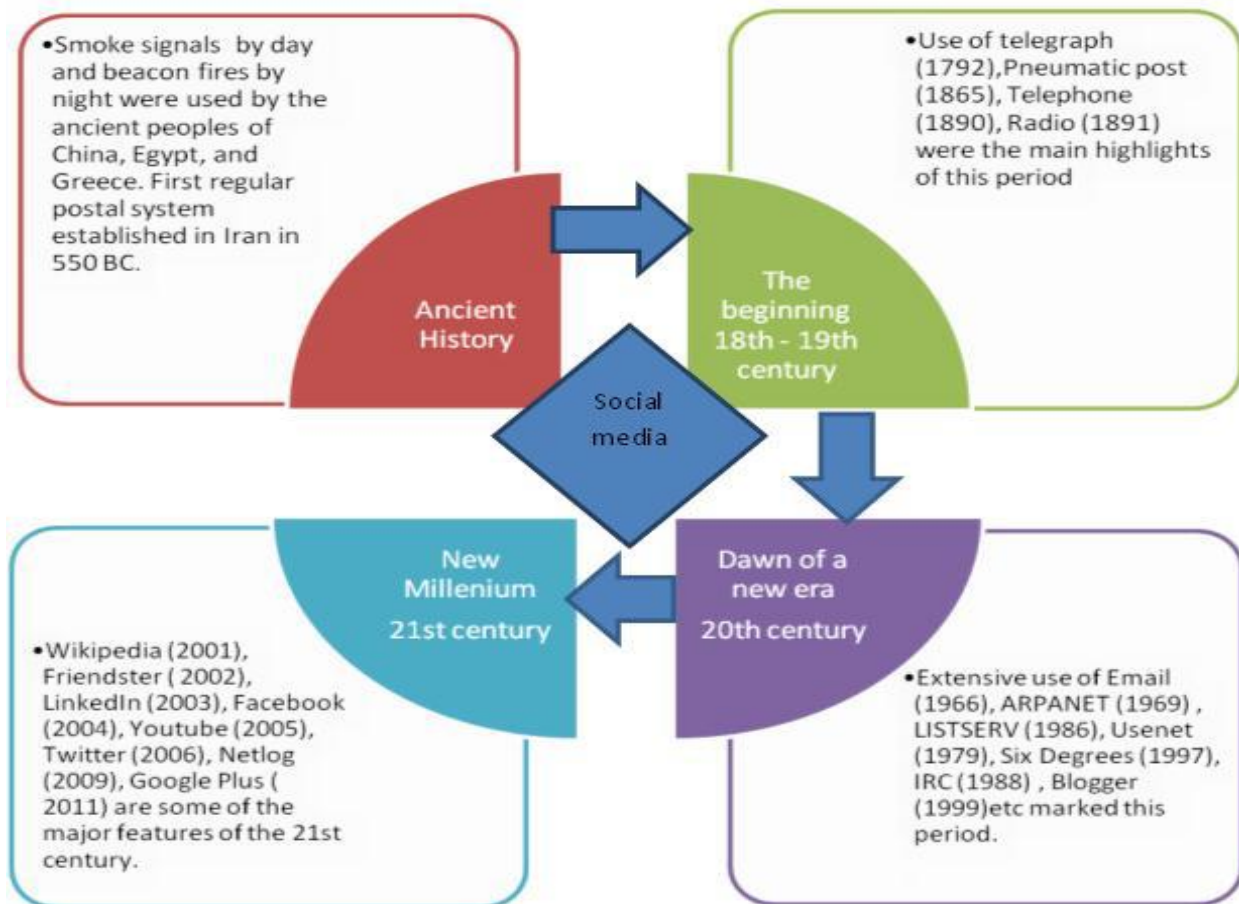
- To understand the opportunities of social media marketing for business organisations in India.
- To identify the impact of social media marketing on products and services.
- To understand the challenges for organisations due to the increasing use of social media by customers.

3. METHODOLOGY

The paper is theoretical in nature. Secondary sources of data collection are used. Data is collected through various journals and websites. The interpretations are made by the author.

4. AN OVERVIEW OF SOCIAL MEDIA

A. History of social media – The earliest ways to send messages over long distances were probably both audio and visual. People used to communicate smoke signals by day and beacon fires by night in ancient China, Egypt, and Greece. Drums were used in many parts of the world to extend the range of the human voice for communication as well. The seeds of social media were sown during 550 BC when the regular postal system was established in Iran where horse riders and horse-drawn wagons carried mail. Usually, mail consisted of governmental dispatches and was delivered from one place to another. The evolution of social media can be understood from the following figure-



The 18th and 19th century were breakthrough period where devices like the telegraph (1792), telephone (1890) and radio (1891) ushered in a new era of the sending and receiving messages over long distances. The increasing number of express messages between businesses, financial and legal offices and banks in growing cities, as well as busy street traffic, gave rise to new methods of telegram and letter transportation. The post was introduced to combat the shortcomings of the telegraphic network in Paris. The invention of telephone and radio took the meaning of communication to another level. The 20th century was marked by the growth and development of internet. With the growth and development of internet, there came era of exchange of messages from one person to another digitally or via web. Email, ARPANET, USENET, BBS (Bulletin Board System), IRC (Internet Relay Chat), Listserv, Blogger, Six Degrees, LiveJournal, Napster were some of the important sites for social interactions and sharing.

The 21st century saw a spurt in the growth of social networking sites by the launching of Friendster, Photolog, Photobucket, Flickr, Orkut, Facebook, Ning, Digg, Twitter, Net log, YouTube etc. Social media has come a long way since the days of the telegraph and even the more recent days of Internet-relay chats (IRC), and it continues to evolve. In the last few years, social media has become a convention of the online landscape. Major social networks and social media

websites make changes and improvements on a fairly regular basis, so it's sure to keep evolving in coming years.

Social media classification

Social media can be classified into the following categories –

1. Social networks (like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) – It is used to connect with people and brands online. It is also helpful in market research, brand awareness, relationship building and customer service. Social networks, sometimes called “relationship networks,” help people and organizations connect online to share information and ideas.

2. Media sharing networks (like Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube) - It is useful to find and share photos, video, live video, and other media online. These sites are very useful for brand awareness, lead generation, audience engagement. It also helps people and brands to find a place and share media online, including photos, video, and live video.

3. Discussion forums (like reddit, Quora, Digg) - It helps to find, discuss, and share news, information, and opinions. These forums are also helpful for market researches and gathering market information. They are also useful in deciding about the whole advertising campaign of organisations.

4. Bookmarking and content curation networks (like Pinterest, Flipboard) – They are used to discover, save, share,

and discuss new and trending content and media. These networks can be highly effective for driving brand awareness, customer engagement, and website traffic. These networks are very useful for creativity and inspiration for people seeking information and ideas, and by adding them to the social media marketing plan of organisations.

5. Consumer review networks (like Yelp, Zomato, TripAdvisor) – They are helpful to find, review, and share information about brands, products, and services, as well as restaurants, travel destinations etc. They can benefit the business by giving positive reviews to bring social proof to business claims and make the customers happy. Consumer review networks give people a place to review brands, businesses, products, services, travel spots, etc.

6. Blogging and publishing networks (like WordPress, Tumblr, Medium) – These are helpful to publish, discover, and comment on online content. Content marketing can be a highly effective way to engage with customers, brand building, and generating sales. A blog doesn't just help increase awareness of business and generate more engaging content for its social channels.

7. Social shopping networks (like Polyvore, Etsy, Fancy) – These networks help to spot trends, follow brands, share great finds, and make purchases. Brands can build awareness, increase engagement, and sell products via new channels. Most of the content is generated by users, who choose products they like, create collages, publish them as a set, and then share sets with other users.

8. Interest-based networks (like Goodreads, Houzz, Last.fm) - They connect with others around a shared interest or hobby. These networks can be a great place to engage with your audience and build brand awareness. These networks help to deliver an experience tailor-made for the wants and needs of the people and communities who share that interest.

9. 'Sharing economy' networks (like Airbnb, Uber, TaskRabbit) – These networks help to advertise, find, share, buy, sell, and trade products and services between friends. They also help in building trust among prospective consumers regarding the products and services of a business. Helps in increasing the social media presence of organisations.

5. SOCIAL MEDIA: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR ORGANISATIONS

- Connecting with Customers - Companies have started using social networking sites as customer relationship management tools for providing services to the customers and also as 'prime' advertising marketing channels (through text or banner advertisements).
- Branding - Moving with fast-paced developments, online technology can help to enhance brand image, improve profile and even win new business. Social media also gives the chance to build brand

awareness and customer loyalty to business organisations.

- Encourage Word-Of Mouth Marketing – Social media marketing allows businesses to increase Word-Of-Mouth marketing as the buying decisions of most consumers are based on recommendations from friends and relatives.
- Providing Support – Social media platforms have broken the barriers between customers and companies as people turn to these platforms to solve problems than directly contacting the companies.
- Cost-Effective Marketing - A major advantage that the social media offers is that it connects a tremendously large number of users at a very low cost and thus provides marketers with an opportunity to expand their user base manifold.
- Crowd-sourcing- Social Media has also benefitted government organisations. They have started using these platforms for seeking free and prompt opinions from the citizens (known as crowd sourcing) and also easily broadcast their message to a wide citizen base at virtually no cost.
- Access to paid advertising Services - Each social platform offers its own form of paid advertising. Paid advertisements offer business organisations the opportunity to connect with interesting business opportunities. Social media platforms allow to make advertisements to appear in the feeds of people who are looking for products and services.
- Evaluation of Performance - The last advantage to social media marketing is the ability to assess the performance of organisations. Social media platforms make it easy for marketers to track their campaign and to see if they are driving valuable results. This can be determined by checking out how many people see posts, comment, like, share our content. If you run an advertising campaign, you can view metrics for that, too.
- Integrated customer care - Customer care via digital channels as we know it is going to change substantially in the near future. To date, many brands have used social media platforms as a place for providing customer care, addressing customers' specific questions, and fixing problems. In the future, social media-based customer care is expected to become even more customized.
- Customers increasingly look to engage with businesses or brands online in multiple ways. They expect a variety of rich content including audio, video, blogs, online forums and social networking. Customers often want to build a relationship with the brand. This requires a two-way dialogue between the customer and the business.
- Social media can be a great way to engage with

customers, with relative ease and little cost. It can form an important part of your marketing strategy. Using social media for maximum benefit to your business, and overcoming the many challenges, requires careful thought and planning. It's important to understand and exploit the business services offered by social media platforms to make a success of your campaign.

Issues of Social Media Marketing

- Choosing appropriate brand ambassador for the organization – The biggest challenge before organisations is to choose appropriate brand ambassador for their products or services. The brand ambassador should have credit worthiness in the market to attract customers.
- Designing a social media strategy – Brands must invest effectively in their social media marketing strategies to increase customer engagement. Social Media Managers should be clear about their goals, identify their target audience and monitor performance continuously.
- Getting Followers – Getting more followers on social media is one of the biggest challenges that every social media marketer face. Brands are more interested in increasing followers as they are seen as potential customers.
- Increasing Audience Engagement – Social Media is a great medium to communicate and connect with customers. But with the increased use of social media, the marketer faces the challenge of constantly finding ways to connect with their audience to increase engagement.
- Fake news and false promises in social media lead to decrease in reputation of organization – The reputation of an organisation may get adversely affected if the marketer makes any false claims or promises.
- Time Management – Managing numerous social networks, engagement with the audience, creation and publication of content and achievement of social media targets can be quite a challenging task when the time for execution is so little.
- Analysing Social Media Performance – Analysis of social media performance is a huge task for social media managers. If data management is not done properly then there are high chances of missing out on new opportunities, new industry trends, audience conversations and brand mentions.

6. FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

Social media is a backbone of marketing to create brand image. Social media is responsible for the development of online applications. Social media marketing helps to promote sales effectively. Social media marketing provides a good

platform to communicate with large number of customers at a time. More customers can be attracted by using innovative advertisements. Organizations in order to save their budget should promote their products and services on one proper channel, which is used by majority of people. They should choose the Brand Ambassador which is having more followers on social networks. Advertisements should be designed in an effective manner in social media. By providing quick response to the customers can build strong relationships. Organizations should use combination of popular social media channels to promote their products and services which increases reputation of company. The company should choose the brand ambassador who is very active and who has more followers in social networks (Facebook, twitter). The company must promote products as according to the present trends which leads to stand in the competition.

7. CONCLUSION

Many companies are using Social media as well as traditional form of media to market their products and to have a better connect with their customers. With the help of social media, business organisations are able to reach out to more customers and cater to their specific needs better. Companies can also build their brand image via social media. Social media is an effective tool in doing business today and brings out innovative strategies out of companies that used to be very monotonous. The above study also determines that social media has a positive impact on business and its growth and performance. The scope of social media will keep on benefitting business organisations from the innovative, financial and social changes in the nation. Indian organisations should have a strong marketing methodology to receive maximum benefits from various social media platforms. Companies that are at maturity stage in the product lifecycle can adopt social media to extend their business survival, if they fail to do so, they are undoubtedly going to lose incoming years.

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