



“A Study On Impact Of Social Media Marketing On Consumer Purchase Decision”

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INTRODUCTION

Social media marketing sites have taken over today's world. From what was started merely for entertainment. Today these websites provides a host of opportunities to its Users ranging from marketing their products increasing awareness on social issue, sharing photos, video class, joining groups and forms of interests promoting an idea, finding family roots finding a lost friend, gaming, entertainment application and so on. Infact the usage of social media marketing sites has been so diverse that many people use it for more than just entertainment. Mena et al (2012) studied the readiness of health students to use Facebook as a platform for training professional habits particularity in the case of influenza vaccination. This clearly shows social networking sites serve as a creative solution to many business problems.

Now that you have an idea of the prevalence of social media and its rapidly growing influence, let's take a look at some of the key ways in which social media can help you connect with your target audience.

- Generate awareness of your company and its products or services by tapping into one of the largest audience in the world.

- Generate leads through your social networking connections, speeding up the process by creating events and promotions.
- Draw in visitors to your websites and other online portals by using your social media resources to promote new content.
- Maintain direct relationships with your customers and potential customers in order to improve your products and get to better know your audience.
- Provide customer service and advice directly to your audience and get useful feedback from your followers to help track your success.
- Facilitate sharing of your online content through the use of social media sharing buttons, effectively letting your audience advertise for you.

The above cites some of the key reasons to get involved in SMM, but there are many more depending on the type of business you are operating. Local businesses can also make extensive use of social media platform targeted specially towards traditional high-street businesses. Sites like **Google Places, Bing Places, Yelp and Foursquare**, among others, help you to show up in local search results and online or mobile maps. What's more is that all of the above is absolutely free to use, and while there are also paid SMM methods, the free ones are far too valuable to neglect.

DIFFERENT METHODS OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

Social network marketing is popularly called as Internet marketing. Today you can find many ways for internet marketing. Many people who enter this online marketing are less worried because of its guaranteed success. If you see in Internet totally all types of products has been marketed online without much effort. Internet attracts many business people to promote their business online. Social network marketing is grown to such a height that today many people can't earn without it.

Some of the most recognized network marketing tools are Face book, MySpace and LinkedIn. Twitter became regular place for people who have newly entered the field of social networking marketing.

1. **BLOGGING:** When you start Blogging or posting your data about any product, you can see less response from clients. Later it will 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 a many other facilities in addition to just marketing your business. It also helps you to communicate with other clients in case if you have any problems.
2. **WEB DESIGN:** It is important to have private website if you are a freelancer. Your website will help your clients to know about you and it will make them clear that you are a serious freelance marketer and help to make huge revenue via online marketing.
3. **ARTICLE SELLING:** It is also best and cheap internet marketing method. It is a mode of advertising our trade just by writing article and attracting endless number of users across world. We

usually sell our article to different article database websites and article directories. Today it provided free business to many advertisers and publishers and they are really benefited through their articles.

4. **EMAIL SENDING:** Electronic mail sending is the best way to marketing. Collect list of email address through portfolio websites and email about your business to all internet users. Your Email should be attractive in such a way that your recipient will be impressed to get back to you.
5. **USE SOCIAL NETWORKING WEBSITES:** Social networking websites like Twitter, face book can be used to promote your sales. These provide best platform for all who are thinking of online marketing.
6. **VIDEO PROMOTION:** Use several video distribution websites for your marketing. These websites uploads your service to the whole world. All that you need 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.

DIGITAL MARKETING AND INTERNET MARKETING

The fields of marketing and advertising have changed over the years and it is clear that that have always taken advantage of the existing technologies. In the past, when the concept of the internet was still unimaginable to many, most business capitalized on traditional channels of marketing such as television, radio, print, and billboard ads. Yes, they are still used by many companies today and if used effectively, they can give big income returns to your business.

When the internet was born, it transformed the world into a global village. People in different time zones can now communicate in a click or press of a button. The internet has become so diverse that even things from your imagination can be found in some corners of World Wide Web. Today, there are two billion internet users; thus, it gave way to the conception of new breeds of marketers and advertisers.

What is Digital Marketing?

Digital marketing refers to the use of electronic device such as computers, tablets, smart phones, and digital billboards, among others, to interact with consumers. It can also be defined as the promotion of brands, products or services using different forms of digital media to reach and engage customers in a timely, relevant, personal and cost-effectively way. Compared to traditional forms of marketing, digital marketing is less expensive and you can have instant access to tangible feedbacks and reports about who saw or heard the ad, and took action. With digital marketing, you can see how a campaign performs in real-time – what is being viewed, how often, duration, and even statistics such as sales conversions.

STUDYING CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR IS VERY MUCH EMPHASIZED FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS.

Buyer behaviour is studied to predict buyer's reaction in markets. If a firm understands its customers, it becomes successful in the market place. The success of any business is based on understanding the consumer and providing the kind of products that the consumer wants.

The consumer decides what to buy, when to buy and also what not to buy. One cannot thrust a product on a consumer. A marketer sells what the consumer wants. So, emphasis is placed on knowing what the consumer's wants are.

1. To satisfy need of customers:

Consumers respond favourably while evaluating the products that best satisfies their needs. A marketer studies how consumers spend their available resources on the consumption of related items. It includes the study of what they buy, when they buy it, where they buy it and how often they use it. So, knowledge of consumer behaviour will be of immense help to the marketer which will help to satisfy their needs.

He can understand the consumer's reaction to a firm's marketing strategies. It would help in planning and implementing marketing strategies.

2. Helps to understand consumer psychology:

The study of consumer behaviour enables the marketer to understand the psychology of consumers. Consumer's psychology is based on his knowledge, attitude, intention and motive.

The psychology of consumer develops on the basis of knowledge he has. Sales promotion plays an important role to provide the knowledge of the product to consumers.

Attitude is a state of mind or feeling. Attitude explains behaviour. Intention means a desire to do something. A marketing programme is formulated only after understanding the intention of consumers. Motive is the integral state which directs the behaviour of a person.

3. Helps to understand consumer motives:

A study of the behaviour of a consumer is essential to understand his/her buying motives. A motive is an urge for which an individual seeks satisfaction. In the words of R.S Davar.

A motive is an inner urge that moves or prompts a person to action.

Consumers have several motives. All these motives may not have the same intensity of purchase. Only a few motives prompt the consumer to buy a product or service. The study of consumer behaviour involves both motives and purchases

4. Helps to understand consumer choices:

It is important for the marketer to understand how consumers make their choices. Human beings are usually very rational. They make systematic use of information available to them before they buy. A marketer studies the behaviour of the customer and accordingly alters his presentation, enticing the customer to go for the product.

5. Helps to understand consumer preferences:

A business firm which is ignorant of consumer preferences cannot succeed in the market place. According to Peter F. Drucker

“It is the consumer who determines what a business is”

Adam Smith has stated that consumption is the sole end and purpose of all production. So, a firm must plan its production and distribution to suit the needs of consumers. Thus, the extent of consumer understanding determines the effectiveness of marketing mechanism.

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING?

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/channels. Social implies the interaction of individual within a group or community.

Taken together, social media simply refers to communication/publication platforms which are generated and sustained by the interpersonal interaction of individuals through the specific medium or tool. Wikipedia has a general definition of the term: Social media is the democratization of information, transforming people from content readers into content publishers. It is the shift from a broadcast mechanism to a many-to-many model, rooted in conversation between authors, people, and peers.

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 and presumably resonates because it appears to come from a trusted, third-party source, as opposed to the brand or company itself. Hence, this form of marketing is driven by word-of-mouth, meaning it results in earned media rather than paid media.

DIMENSION OF THE SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

- 1. Online Communities:** A company or business can use the social media to build a community around its products/business. Vibrant communities create loyalty and encourage discussions, which can contribute towards business development and improvement.

2. **Interaction:** A Facebook page or Twitter account can notify all its followers of specific subject quickly and simultaneously. Social networking sites enable greater interaction with the online community through broadcasting up-to-date, consumer relevant information.
3. **Sharing of Content:** The sharing dimension is about the extent to which an individual exchanges, distributes and receives content in a social media setting.
4. **Accessibility:** The social media is easily accessible and takes minimal or no costs to use. Social media is easy to use and does not require any special skills, knowledge to use.
5. **Credibility:** it is all about delivering your message clearly to the people, establishing credibility for what you say or do, connecting emotionally with your target audience, motivating the buyer and generating loyal customers. The social media provides a very good platform for all businesses (big and small) to network and reach out to their target audience, connect with them directly and generate trust by listening to what they have to say.

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING IN INDIA

An overview India has 95 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 2014 Social Media was sued for Influence Indian Voters. Social Media Marketing in India is being undertaken by all e-Retailing & e-commerce organizations and many 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 exercising 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 on 12 Social Networking Sites. These campaigns have been spreading the word about their cause through blogs, Twitter and Facebook.

IMPORTANT OF SOCIAL MEDIA

The importance of social media is undebatable. 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.

SMO STRATEGY FOR BUSINESS

A wisely implemented Social Media Optimization (SMO) strategy can give a great boost to your business. To draw maximum benefit out of Social Media, you need to set clear and well-defined business goals and objectives. The following points are the backbone of any well-laid SMO strategy:

- Set measurable and achievable goals.
- Know your customers.
- Research over market and trends.
- Explore more social networking platforms. Reflect your presence on all.
- Choose core topics related to your business. Use them in content.
- Set Social Engagement parameters.
- Plan your resource use.
- Track your results.

SMO – KEY CONCEPTS

Aim for building reputation by depicting yourself as a trusted source or business.

- Encourage more engagement and sharing.
- Be an authorized name in your industry.
- Gear up originality.
- Keep it social.
- Master over your media platforms.
- Optimize every single point that hinders your efforts.

BRAND AWARENESS

Brand awareness is a degree to which your brand name is known. Brand name solidifies customers' trust. So, it is important that your brand name overshadows your products. Promoting the brand name helps your business grow and get over obsolete business state.

Social Media Marketing can help you in branding your business. It helps you increase your public profile as well. All you need is to Choose right Social Media Channel for your business.

- Finalize a social content strategy.
- Make a strong content strategy.
- Participate in good conversation with your customers to let them feel more connected.
- Keep track of all key metrics like potential reach, conversation share, links, etc.



SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

Social Media Engagement is the process of reaching out to potential customers and interacting with them through Social Media. It is primarily done in order to draw attention towards a particular product or a service. It is a two-way channel where a consumer can share a good relationship with the vendors. Use Social Media platforms to announce any event you are organizing.

- Entertain Posts your audience is posting.
- Use Social Media Circles to participate in valuable and educational conversations.
- Participate in Social Media groups.

Measure your engagement level to trace your engagement efforts. It is basically a ratio between the social platforms that you use and the social platforms that you don't use to engage. The higher is the level, the stronger is your bonding with the audience.

VIRAL MARKETING

Any hot topic that is infectious is Viral Marketing. It is 'exposing an idea' for a cause. It is a message getting viral by passing it from one to another with an intention of boosting your business. Social Media Viral Marketing is the use of social media channels to spread any message for creating brand awareness. Viral marketing rate may differ on each level.

COMPARISION OF TRADITIONAL ADVERTISING WITH SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISING

Traditional advertising media includes print media, radio and visual media. In fact, only the print media was considered to be traditional media but in this context of discussing the impact of social media advertising and its comparison with other media advertisements, all other existing media except the social

media is gaining importance and acceptance, 45% of advertisement revenue is still paid for advertisement in the print media Hampel (2012). This can be debate to be a result of the inexpensive social media is very less, the mass appeal is much higher and hence more returns can be expected, identified that “consumers are becoming increasingly resistant to traditional advertising”. Precise targeting of consumers is not possible in mass media such as print and television. Whereas by using the Internet as a source of advertisements, people who are interested in a particular product can be drawn towards the company more easily. As mentioned before, this is called as a pull strategy as opposed to a push strategy. Even within the traditional media of adverting, premium print advertisement which are far more expensive than normal advertisements are being widely used. “More prestigious perception of an advertising stimulus converges with the advertised brand, thereby leading premium-print advertisements to be perceived more prestigiously”.

The interactive nature of social media is the factor which draws a large of people towards it as compared to the traditional media such as TV, radio and print media. Social media is more customisable as compared to traditional media. In social media, it is easy to find what a consumer needs. Contrastingly, in case of traditional media, the consumer is forced to enjoy whatever is broadcasted by someone else. Social media makes it easier to search for relevant information thereby cutting down the time, energy and money required to search for it. Above all man being a social animal is on the constant outlook interacting with other people around him. Traditional media does not give an opportunity for this whereas social media was actually built for this purpose in the first place. Though there are some downsides to social media marketing such as privacy concern, legal concern and over exposure towards public, these limitations can be overcome if social media is used promptly, wisely and effectively. Thus social media is by any chance better than traditional media in terms of expense, wider appeal and lesser indirect costs.

INTRODUCTION ON CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOR

Consumer behaviour is the study of individuals, groups, or organisations and the processes they use to select, secure, and dispose of products, services, experiences, or ideas to satisfy needs and the impacts that these processes of buyers, both individually and in groups. It studies characteristics of individual consumers such as demographic and behavioural variables in an attempt to understand people’s wants. It also tries to asses influences on the consumer from groups such as family, friends, reference groups, and society in general Behaviour study is based on consumer buying behaviour, with the customer playing the three distinct roles of user, payer and buyer.

Research has shown that consumer behaviour is difficult to predict, even for experts in the field. Consumers behaviour involves the psychological processes that consumers go through in recognizing needs, finding ways to solve these needs, making purchase decisions (e.g., whether or not to purchase a product and, if so, which brand and where), interpret information, make plans, and implement these plans (e.g., by engaging in comparison shopping or actually purchasing a product).

FACTORS AFFECTING CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR

Consumer buying behaviour is influenced by the major three factors:

- I. Social Factors
- II. Psychological factors
- III. Personal factors.

Social Factors

Social factors refer to forces that other people exert and which affect consumers' purchase behaviour. These social factors can include culture and subculture, roles and family, social class and reference groups.

Example:

By taking into consideration Reference group, these can influence/affect the consumer buying behaviour. Reference group refer to a group with whom an individual identifies herself/himself and the extent to which that person assumes many values, attitudes or behaviour of group members. Reference groups can be family, school or college, work group, club membership, citizenship etc.

Reference groups serve as one of the primary agents of consumer socialization and learning and can be influential enough to induce not only socially acceptable consumer behaviour. For example, if fresher student joins a college/university, he/she will meet different people and form a group, in that group there can be behaviour pattern of values, for example style of clothing, handsets which most of group member prefer or even destructive such as excessive consumption of alcohol, use of harmful and addictive drugs etc. So, according to how an individual reference him/her to that particular reference group, this will influence and change his/her buying behaviour.

Psychological Factors

These are internal to an individual and generate forces within that influence her/his purchase behaviour. The major forces include motives, perception, learning, attitude and personality.

Example:

Attitude is an enduring organization of motivational, emotional, perceptual and cognitive processes with respect to some aspect of our environment. Consumers form attitude towards a brand on the basis of their beliefs about the brand. For example, consumers of Sony products might have the belief that the products offered by Sony are durable; this will influence those customers to buy Sony products due to this attitude towards the brand.

Personal Factors

These include those aspects that are unique to a person and influence purchase behaviour. These factors include demographic factors, lifestyle, and situational factors.

Example:

Lifestyle is an indicator of how people live and express themselves on the basis of their activities, interests, and opinions. Lifestyle dimension provide a border view of people about how they spend their time the importance of things in their surroundings and their beliefs on broad issues associated with life and living and themselves. This is influenced by demographic factors and personality.

E.g. – A CEO or Manager is likely to buy more formal clothes, ties and shoes or PDAs and less informal clothes like jeans as compared to a Mechanic or Civil engineer. So according to their lifestyle and profession, the buying behaviour of people differs from one another.



CONSUMER BUYING DECISION PROCESS

Consumer buying decision process is the processes undertaken by consumer in regard to a potential market transaction before, during and after the purchase of a product or service.

Consumer decision making process generally involves five stages:

A. Problem Recognition

Purchase decision making process begins when a buyer becomes aware of an unsatisfied need or problem. This is the vital stage in buying decision process, because without recognition the need or want, an individual would not seek to buy good or service.

There are several situations that can cause problem recognition, these include:

- Deletion of stock
- Dissatisfaction With goods in stock
- Environmental Changes
- Change in Financial Situation
- Marketer Initiated Activities

It's when a person recognizes that she cannot make a call from her mobile phone that's when she recognizes that phone has been damaged i.e. the phone has hardware problems and needs to be repaired or buying a new piece.

B. Information Search

After the consumer has recognized the need, he/she will try to find the means to solve that need, first he will recall how he used to solve such kind of a problem in the past, this is called nominal decision making,

Secondly, a consumer will try to solve the problem by asking a friend or goes to the market to seek advice for which product will best serve his need, this is called limited decision making.

Sources of information include:

- Personal Sources
- Commercial Sources
- Public Sources
- Personal experience

C. Alternatives Evaluation

Consumers' evaluates criteria refer to various dimension; features, characteristics and benefits that a consumer desires to solve a certain problem. Product features and its benefits is what influence consumer to prefer that particular product. The consumer will decide which product to buy from a set of alternative product depending on each unique feature that the product offers and the benefits he/she can get out of that feature.

D. Purchase Action

This stage involves selection of brand and the retail outlet to purchase such as product.

Retail outlet image and its location are important. Consumer usually prefers a nearby retail outlet for minor shopping and they can willingly go to a faraway store when they purchase items which are of higher values and which involve higher sensitive purchase decision. After selecting where to buy and what to buy, the consumer completes the final step of transaction by either cash or credit.

E. Post-Purchase Actions

Consumer favourable post-purchase evaluation leads to satisfaction. Satisfaction with the purchase is basically a function of the initial performance level expectation and perceived performance relative to those expectations. Consumer tends to evaluate their wisdom on the purchase of that particular product. This can result to consumer experiencing post purchase dissatisfaction. If the consumer's perceived performance level is below expectation and fail to meet satisfaction this will eventually cause dissatisfaction, and so the brand and/or the outlet will not be considered by the consumer in the future purchases. This might cause the consumer to initiate complaint behaviour and spread negative word-of-mouth concerning that particular product.



BRANDING INFLUENCE ON CONSUMER PURCHASING BEHAVIOUR

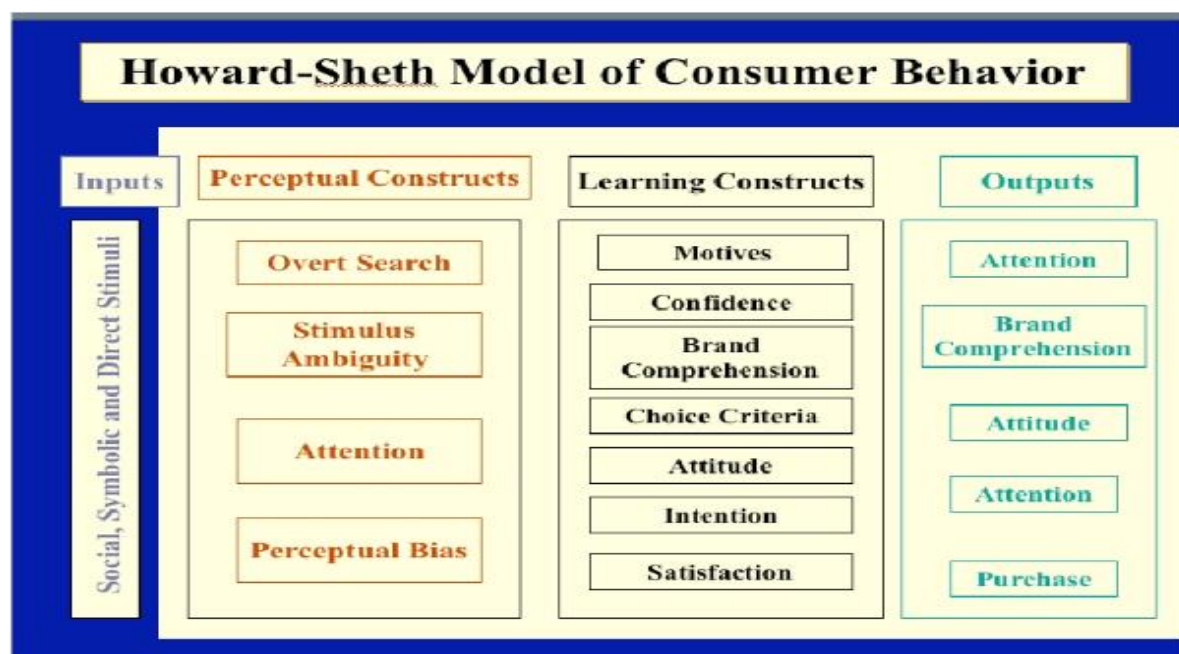
The preceding section of this literature reviewed has sought to define the term branding and explain its functions and value as an instrumental marketing tool used in attaining differential and competitive advantage.

The following section of this literature review will seek to enlighten the impact branding has on the consumer decision-making process.

First however, one must gain clear insight into the definition of consumer buying behaviour in order to understand the impact branding has on it. In defining “consumer buying behaviour”, one may refer to Assael (1987) who distinguishes four types of consumer buying behaviour. He bases these four consumer types on the varying degrees of involvement and the degree of differentiation amongst the brands in question.

Consumers who are described as displaying complex buying behaviour will expand their beliefs regarding a particular product as a starting point. This stage will eventually lead them to develop positive attitudes regarding the product. These intermediary stages lead them to the final stage of their behaviour pattern, where they consciously make the choice of purchasing the product. Referring to the Assael's model; one will notice this type of consumer engages in highly involved purchasing experiences being fully aware of the range of brands available and their levels of differentiation.

In order to fully ascertain the effects that branding has on the consumer decision making process, the Howard-Sheth Decision-making model by Howard and Sheth (1969) is used that explains not only the process of consumer decision-making during purchasing activities, but one that facilitates the understanding of pre and post purchasing activities as well.



The model's core assumption lies in that the key to determining behaviour exhibited by consumers is to fully understand the consumer thought process. The Howard-Sheth model illustrates that cognitive decision-making is the process in which consumers mentally process information that influences his or her selection of brands.

IMPACT ON THE CONSUMER LEARNING PROCESS

At its model basic definition, one can define the consumer learning process as being a time period in which a customer is heavily exposed to the branding process of a product or service. The branding process can include any aspect of the promotional strategy, including audio/visual forms of promotion. By learning from this information, whether it is a conscious process or not, the consumer will develop strong feelings towards a brand. For marketers, branding has a vital effect on the learning process, because it is self-growing. Once consumers start to purchase product, others will vicariously learn from them. Vicarious learning is when consumers begin to copy the behavioural patterns of their peers by making changes in their own lives to reflect what they have "vicariously" learnt.

In searching for a more academic view on consumer learning, one can understand the process as modifications to a consumer's behavioural patterns that are the direct consequence of either past experiences or information gathered during all aspects of the purchase decision-making process. These modifications are caused by information that has essentially been saved as a set of meaningful associations in the consumer's mind. These above-mentioned associations provide the consumer with link to the brand image of offerings in respects to the promotional tools used to further this brand image. These tools include both physical characteristics of the product as well as pricing policies. All the elements that are retained by the consumer stem from what they have been exposed to during their individual learning process. This is ultimately, what will shape their views and attitudes in regards to brands.

It has been found that the learning process discussed above acts as a catalyst in creating emotional and evaluating responses. These responses are embedded in the consumer's memory span, which will be recalled when faced with a purchase decision-making process. Thus, understanding the learning process is the key to marketers who seek to efficiently use promotional methods to influence consumers, because the imprints they create in the mind of consumer will later on be recalled when selecting a product or brand.

IMPACT ON CONSUMER' PERCEPTION OF BRANDS

Perception is crucial in the decision-making process. In a market where branding is used, products are no longer only purchased for their functional characteristics, but primarily for the social or in some cases, psychological identify they express.

Building on these concepts, one can elaborate on these concepts by outlining two determinants that influence a consumer's perception of brands. These two factors are stimulus discrimination and stimulus generalization.

Whether a consumer has the ability to "discriminate" between the various methods used to stimulate a consumer? When a customer is introduced to a brand, whether this is done via advertising, packaging, word of mouth marketing or any other form of stimuli that affected them during their decision-making process, their levels of awareness of the brand will gradually increase via their ability to learn. Once their level of brand awareness has increased, their purchase decision-making process will be influenced by their perception of the brand in question.

In the event that a consumer is new user with no product experience, he or she will not be able to make relevant decisions based on the actual product. Thus, the brand image again, becomes vital in directing the consumer to a specific product.

In order to better understand the relevance of branding on the consumer purchase decision making process, four key factors that are responsible for directing a potential consumer towards a particular brand are referred.

Perceived Quality	In time, consumer will have faith in a brand's integrity via their perceived quality of the brand in question
Building Excellent Service	When a company implements excellent after service sales, this endorses the perceived quality of the brand and facilitates activities in the pre and post purchase moments of the decision-making process. As discussed previously, this is key in the creation of loyal customers
Standing Out in the Consumer's	By striving to differentiate one's brand from another, companies hope to become embedded in the user's culture and mind. This is the most effective way to insure consumers positively perceive the brand and product. This eventually leads to extremes forms of competitive advantage.
Investing in Differential Markets	When one seeks to establish a brand, it is essential to select a market in which it is possible to create differentiation. Otherwise, the concepts of branding will not be possible.

IMPACT ON CONSUMERS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS BRANDS

An attitude can be considered to be either positive or negative, depending on the outcome of their learning and evaluating process.

The evaluation of consumer attitudes towards brands has quickly become a major part in conducting marketing research. The development of positive attitudes towards brands can lead to not only the sustaining of competitive advantages, but in the bettering of the financial health of a company.

Branding has been found to be key information of positive attitudes towards products, especially those involving low-levels of consumer involvement. However it has been noted that there are factors that might negate the effects of the formation of positive attitudes. One being that the effects of positive attitudes can dissipate should the consumer not purchase the product within a certain timeframe. Another factor that might negate the effects of positive attitudes might be an overtly high pricing policy, which have a contrary effect to the consumer's positive attitudes towards the brand and result in a non-sale.

In considering attitudes towards brands, one must ponder whether these attitudes all remain at a conscious level, or whether branding can instigate attitudes at a sub-conscious level. Sigmund Freud's theory that individuals are rarely aware of how their own psychology shapes their visual behavioural patterns which suggests that at an unconscious level, consumer might have beliefs that shape their attitudes towards products. By acknowledging Freud's theories, one can conclude that branding can be used to target sub-conscious desires that rest at a primal level.

POSITIONING

Various authors have given different definition of Positioning. Some are:-

Beckman, Kurtz, Boonee

“Product positioning refers to the consumer’s perception of a product’s attribute, use, quantity & advantages & disadvantages in relation to competing brands.”

Berkowitz, Kerlin, Rudelius

“Product positioning refers to the place an offering occupies in the consumer’s mind on important attributes relative to competitive offerings.”

USEFULNESS OF POSITIONING

As competition intensifies & brands proliferate, consumers tend to differentiate between brands in their own way. Positioning is a conscious attempt on the part of the marketer to accentuate this natural tendency & in the process, impart a distinct identify to his own brand to make it stand out among the competitors. The basis on which this differentiation is achieved reflects consumers’ preferences or attributes. The markets, through his diverse & coordinated actions, try to influence this process.

The concept of positioning is also important in various other aspects of the marketing strategy. Once one is clear about the position one wants, the other marketing decision like product design, packaging, pricing, method of distribution, etc., become clearer.

BRAND POSITIONING

It should be remembered that positioning is more a reflection of a product and that it stifles the rich meaning of the brand without taking into account all its potentialities.

Positioning applies to the process of emphasizing the brands distinctive and motivating attributes in the light of competition.

It is based on the analysis of response to the following four questions.

POSITIONING

- WHY?
- FOR WHOM?
- WHEN?
- AGAINST WHOM?

ELEMENTS OF POSITIONING

Evidence has shown that there are four distinct variables that affect the positioning of a given product. These are:-

- The product itself,
- The company behind it,
- The competition,

a) **The product**

How important the product is or what meaning it has for the consumer & how he relates to it. The fact that a product involves better intergradient or processes is a matter of indifference unless this knowledge offers distinct advantages to consumer.

b) **The company**

A product comes from a company & every company has its own history. Generally, the stronger the companies profile the better the image of its products. For instance, consumers may perceive a better the image of a product if it comes from a reputed house like Tata's.

c) **The competition**

Product positioning is invariably done in relation to various competitive offerings. In most cases, the consumers have a tendency to judge a product in comparison to the dominant brands, e.g., all photocopiers are compared with Modi Xerox, all PCs with HCL, toothpastes with Colgate & so on. Leading brand enjoys some edge over others.

d) **The consumer**

It should be reiterated that positioning is essentially based on consumer perception rather than factual evaluation. Hence, it becomes necessary to examine how the consumer views a product. Here, it becomes necessary to examine how the consumer views a product. Here, the consumer's self-perception comes into along with his cognitive & connotative factors

CHAPTER-2

LITERATURE REVIEW

- 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 cantered 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. This review examines current literature that focuses on a retailer's development and use of social media as an extension of their marketing strategy. This phenomenon has only developed within the last decade, thus social media research has largely focused on (1) defining what it is through the explanation of new terminology and concepts that makeup its foundations, and (2) exploring the impact of a company's integration of social media on consumer behavior. This paper begins with an explanation of terminology that defines social media marketing, followed by a discussion of the four main themes found within current research studies: Virtual Brand Communities, Consumers Attitudes and Motives, User Generated Content, and Viral Advertising.

- Although social media marketing is a well-researched topic, it has only been studied through experimental and theoretical research; studies never precisely describe the benefits retailers gain from this marketing tactic. In reviewing the rich plethora of multi-disciplinary literature, it has become clear that studies are focusing on describing what social media marketing is as well as examining what factors affect consumer behavior relative to social networking. Despite the initial progress made by researchers, development in this area of study has been limited. Research needs to expand by providing a deeper understanding of the long term promotional gains retailers obtain from social media marketing. More formalized studies are also needed to progress beyond theorized or predicted outcomes in order to gain knowledge of real life applications. This review of literature touches upon the gaps that currently exist within social media marketing research and points out the need for future studies to explore the benefits gained by marketing on social networking sites, especially for small retailers.
- To consider social media as a marketing tool a retailer must understand every aspect of it. Social media cannot be understood without first defining Web 2.0: a term that describes a new way in which end users use the World Wide Web, a place where content is continuously altered by all operators in a sharing and collaborative way (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010). "It is much more to do with what people are doing with the technology than the technology itself, for rather than merely retrieving information, users are now creating and consuming it, and hence adding value to the websites that permit them to do so" (Campbell et al. 2011, 87). Web 2.0 has evolved from simple information retrieval to interactivity, interoperability, and collaboration (Campbell et al. 2011).
- Kaplan and Haenlein (2010, 61) define social media as "a group of Internet based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and allow the creation and exchange of user generated content." Sinclaire and Vogus (2011, 294) cite O'Reilly's (2005) definition: "social media is a broad term that describes software tools that create user generated content that can be shared." However, there are some basic features necessary for a website to meet the requirements as a social network website: the site must contain user profiles, content, a method that permits users to connect with each other and post comments on each other's pages, and join virtual groups based on common interests such as fashion or politics. (Gross & Acquisti, 2005;

Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007; Lenhart & Madden, 2007; Winder, 2007; Boyd & Ellison, 2007 as cited in Cox 2010).

- The phrase social networking sites' is often used interchangeably with social media. However, social media is different because it allows participants to unite by generating personal information profiles and inviting friends and colleagues to have access to those profiles (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010, 63). Thus, social media is the environment in which social networking takes place and has altered the way in which consumers gather information and make buying decisions.
- Consumers' Sentiment toward Marketing (CSM) is a factor considered by researchers to measure how well consumers will perceive social media marketing. CSM is defined as a concept which refers to the general feelings that consumers have for marketing and the marketplace (Lawson et al. 2001 as cited by Mady 2011). An individual's perception of the overall marketplace plays a major role in whether or not they are motivated to partake in consumption activities (Mady 2011). In order to create a successful marketing campaign via social media, a consumer must be open to the technology. Consumer technology readiness is defined as "people's propensity to embrace and use new technologies for accomplishing goals in home and work" (Parasuraman, 2000 as cited by Mady 2011, 195). Consumer technology readiness is important for retailers to remember when marketing on social networks because if their intended target market does not use social media, is not familiar with it, or perceives it negatively, then their social media marketing will be unrewarding. Analysis of technology readiness can determine if marketing via interactive advertising would be a good fit for a retailer's target market.
- The Innovation Adoption Process (IAP) is another instrument that provides information on a consumer's acceptance of new technology. The IAP is the progression through which an individual goes through the innovation-decision process (Rogers as cited in Mady 2011). Five steps make up the process: knowledge of the innovation, forming an attitude toward the innovation, deciding to adopt or reject the innovation, implementation of the innovation, and confirmation of the decision (Mady 2011). Knowledge of IAP can help marketers obtain a social media marketing campaign that is fulfilling.
- 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 favourite companies and the products they sell. Marketers and retailers are utilizing these sites as another way to reach consumers and provide a new way to shop. "Technology related developments such as the rise of powerful search engines, advanced mobile devices and interfaces, peer-to-peer communication vehicles, and online social networks have extended marketers' ability to reach shoppers through new touch points" (Shankar et al. 2011, 30).
- Shopper marketing is a new concept that has emerged, creating a new touch point for the interactions between businesses and consumers. Shopper marketing is "the planning and execution of all marketing activities that influence a shopper along, and beyond, the entire path of purchase, from the point at which the motivation to shop first emerges through purchase, consumption,

repurchase, and recommendation” (Shankar et al. 2011, 29). Perceived fit is an important factor for retailers to consider for shopper marketing; perceived fit is the amount of similarity between an extension product category and existing products affiliated with the brand (DelVecchio and Smith as cited in Cha 2009). The more people perceive shopping services on social networking sites as useful and easy to use, the more likely they are willing to shop for items on social networks (Cha 2009). Providing shopping services on social networks can provide business growth for retailers due to the diversity of consumers who use social media sites. The wide range of consumers utilizing social networks means that most target markets can be reached (Cha 2009). This provides an effective platform for retailers to promote their brand and products to potential consumers. According to Shankar et al. (2011), shopper marketing can join forces with shoppers to improve products, create clear messages, identify promoters, and serve as a connection to in-store activities, thus demonstrating the importance of social media within a retailer’s marketing plan. Advancements within social media sites have created consumer communities that are defining new ways in which companies and customers can interact with one another to share information on brand products. For example, virtual brand communities are creating a computer-generated space for consumers and retailers to connect with one another via marketing.

- A main topic being studied involving social media as a marketing tool is Virtual Brand Communities (VBC). “VBC can be described as aggregations of consumers that occur on the internet because of their interest in some brand or product” (Muniz and O’Guinn as cited in Georgi and Mink 2012, 3). Specifically, a brand community is a group of people who share the same interest in a particular brand or product (Casaló, Favián and Guinalú 2008). Overall, VBC’s are “the site[s] of complex brand meaning creation and consumption efforts” (Muñiz and Jensen Schau, 2007). Casaló, Favián and Guinalú (2008) found when a member is trusting of the VBC that they are part of, it increases their amount of participation, and consumers who have a positive participation experience are more loyal to the brand. Trust is a central aspect to guarantee the VBC’s survival. Cha (2009) concludes that security is a major factor affecting a consumer’s opinions toward social networking sites and can ultimately impact trust. Since VBCs depend on individual users’ participation, both group unity and awareness can strengthen users’ satisfaction with a VBC (Casaló, Favián and Guinalú 2008). The study done by Casaló, Favián and Guinalú (2008) demonstrates the powerful sway VBC and an online interaction between consumers can have on their buying behavior.
- Studies also found that within these VBCs many new forms of social interactions are taking place such as Electronic Consumer to Consumer Interaction (eCCI), which are interactions between consumers of e-services (Georgi and Mink 2012). The chance to mingle with other people is a fundamental part of the consumer experience and social networking sites have become a way in which consumers can interact with one another and retailers (Georgi and Mink 2012). Because of eCCI, consumers are playing a more dominant role in influencing each other with their consumption decisions. Georgi and Mink (2012) came up with the concept of electronic consumer

to consumer interaction quality (eCCI). They found that seven factors contribute to the success of eCCI. These include content, security, hedonic (meaning the emotional aspects of consumers' interactions with products), quality, atmosphere, convenience, and social. An example of eCCI (which is any interaction between consumers of e-services) is when a consumer posts a question about the fit or color of a product displayed online and another consumer answers the question. This eCCI event would presumably be of high quality if the question is answered by another consumer quickly, correctly, and in a friendly manner. This example of an interaction between consumers involves some of the factors associated with eCCI such as social and convenience, thus making it an eCCI occurrence. Consumers feel more engaged with products and companies when they have the option to submit feedback (Mangold and Faulds 2009). Accordingly, it is important for retailers to be aware of the quality of their social media presence even when consumers are the creators of their marketing because it is increasingly influencing how consumers shop. Companies need to be aware of the variety of factors that affect their social media presence such as a consumer's social identity online.

- Some VBC research focused on the concept of social identity and group norms as an aspect that strongly influences online groups' buying behavior. The nature and culture of social media groups affect the ways members of such groups interpret and attach meaning to brands and products (Muñiz and Jensen Schau, 2007). Group norms represent the set of shared goals, beliefs, and values that the group members follow. Social identity refers to the values and beliefs that influence group related behavior (Zeng, Huang, and Dou 2009). Community members within a strong social group were more likely to have group intentions to accept advertising in online communities (Zeng, Huang, and Dou 2009). For instance, if a Facebook group is centered on luxury brands, then ads pertaining to high-end products are more relevant to members of the VBC. Some members consume ads more easily by accepting the meanings in which they contain, while others interpret the ads by attaching meaning to the brand represented based on their own experiences (Muñiz and O'Guinn as cited in Muñiz and Jensen Schau, 2007).
- Moreover, VBC members value ads that are relevant to the theme of their community. Muñiz and Jensen Schau (2007) found advertising and branding produce discouragement of the intended meaning of the ad in order to serve the meaning of the distinct group, in this circumstance the brand community. A VBC can alter or manipulate the true meaning of an ad by the way it displays or uses an ad for branding. Many time VBC's change the meaning of an ad by the way it is presented on the community forum. A VBC can alter an ad to conform to the theme of its community, therefore the ads true meaning gets lost. An individual's identity within social media combined with the social community's customs affects the way in which people perceive ads presented on social media. Community customs can be affected by users' cultural backgrounds as well.

CHAPTER-3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

MEANING OF RESEARCH

In the broadest sense of the word the definition of the definition of the research includes any gathering of data, information and facts for advancement of knowledge.

Research is a careful investigation of especially through search for new fact in any branch of knowledge. Methodology is a systematically to solve the research problem. It may be understand as a science of studying how research is done logically. The various steps that are generally adopted by research in studying researcher problem in studying researcher problem are the main function of research methodology.

DEFINITION-

According to Clifford Woody:

“Research comprise of defining and redefining problem, formulating hypothesis (suggested solution), collecting, organizing, and evaluating data making deductions and reaching conclusions and at last carefully testing the conclusions to determine whether they fit the formulated hypothesis”.

Research is a scientific inquiry aimed at learning new facts, testing ideas, etc. it is the systematic collection, analysis and interpretation of data to generate new knowledge and answer a certain question or solve a problem. Researcher methodology is a science of studying how research is to be carried out. Essentially, the procedures by which researchers go about their work of describing, explaining and predicting phenomena are called research methodology. It is also defined as the study of methods by which knowledge is gained. Its aim is to give the work plan of research.

RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is the arrangement of condition of collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedures.

In this I have Descriptive Research Design

A) DESCRIPTIVE RESEARCH DESIGN:

Descriptive Research studies are those which are concerned with describing the characteristics of a particular individual, or for a group. The studies conversion whether with the specific prediction with narration of facts and characteristics concerning individuals, group or situation are all example of Descriptive Research Studies.

B) EXPLORATORY RESEARCH DESIGN:

Exploratory Research Studies are also termed as formulate research studies. The main purpose of such studies that of formulating a problem for more precise investigation or of developing the working hypotheses from an operational point of view.

The major emphasis in such studies is on the discovery of ideas and insights.

Generally, the following three methods in the research design for such studies are talked about:

- The survey of concerning literature
- The experience survey and
- The analysis of insight – stimulating examples.

C) EXPERIMENTAL RESEARCH DESIGN:

In it, casual relationship between the variables is tested.

DATA COLLECTION:

Data collection is one of important tasks of the research, which is based on PRIMARY and SECONDARY DATA.

PRIMARY DATA

The primary data are those data, which are collected afresh and for the first time and thus happen to be original in character. There are some important methods:

- Observation method
- Interview method
- Through questionnaire

SECONDARY DATA

Secondary data is the data that have been already collected by and readily available from other sources. Such data cheaper and more quickly obtainable at all. These are:

QUANTITATIVES:

Census, housing, social security as well as electoral statistics and other related database.

QUALITATIVE:

Semi-structure and structured-interview, focus-groups transcripts, field notes observation record and other personal, research-related documents.

SAMPLE DESIGN

it is not possible for any researcher to include each and every member of the universe process. So, he selects small portion of the universe, which is its true representative.

Sampling techniques are of two types:

- **NON-PROBABILITY SAMPLING**
- **PROBABILITY SAMPLING**

1. PROBABILITY SAMPLING:

It is known as “Random Sampling” or “Chance Sampling”. In it,, each population element has equal chance of selection.

It can be following types:

Simple Random Sampling

Stratified Sampling

Cluster Sampling

2. NON-PROBABILITY SAMPLING:

In it, sample deliberately by researcher, by using his own judgment. In this, every item of universe does not have equal chance of inclusion in the sample.

It can be following types:

- **Convenience Sampling**
- **Judgment Sampling**
- **Quota Sampling**

In this report we are using non-probability sampling.

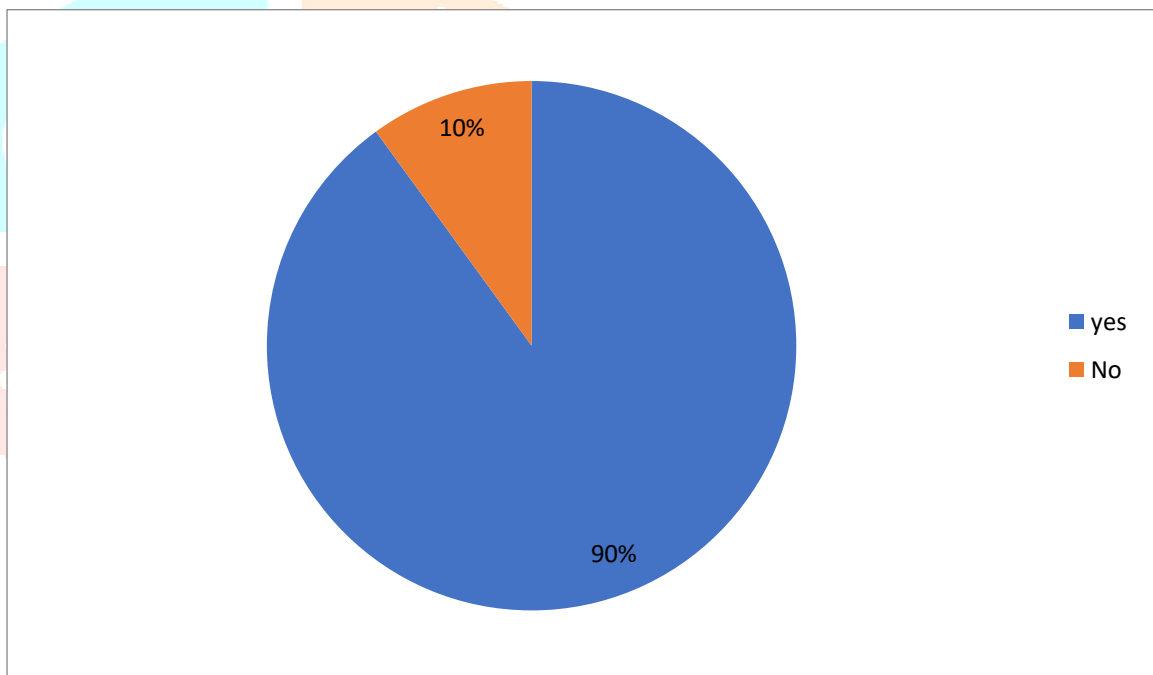
Research Design used for the present study in summarized

RESEARCH DESIGN	Descriptive Research
SAMPLE UNIT	Individual
SAMPLE TECHNIQUES	Non-Probability sampling
DATA COLLECTION	Primary data is collected from questionnaire
OUESTIONNAIRE TYPE	Structured
DATA ANALYSIS	Quantitative Analysis through Pie Charts and Quantitative analysis

CHAPTER 4**DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

Do you think social media is the most sought after method adopted by young and old in the field of marketing, advertising, brand building, promotions?

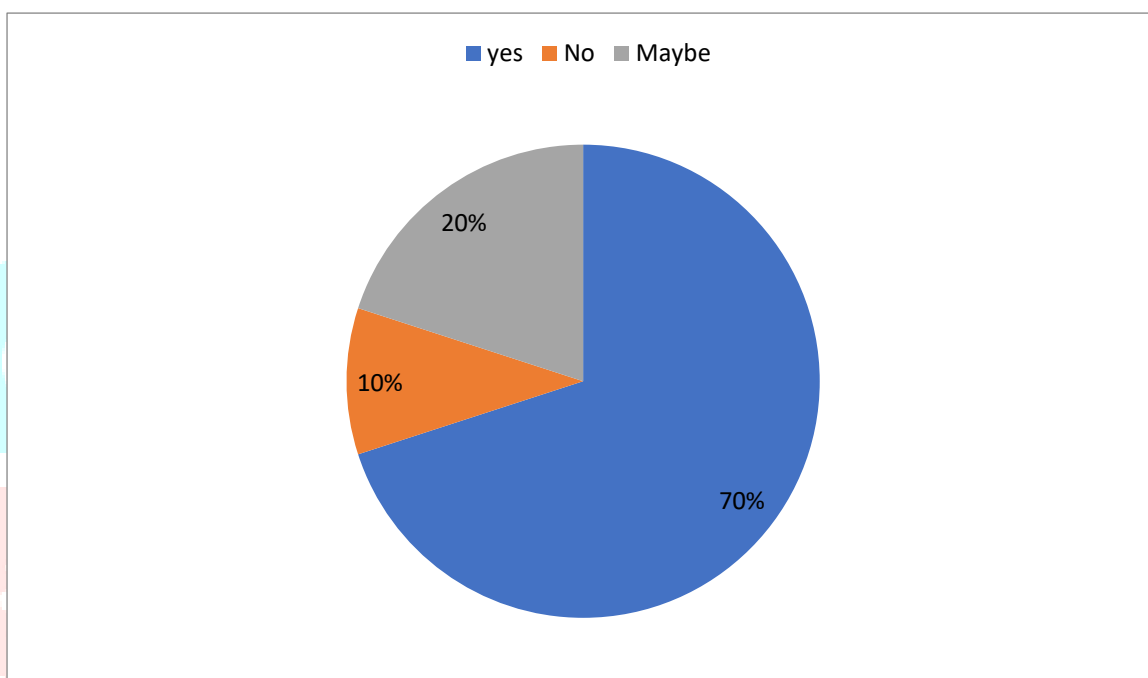
Option	Number of responses	Percentage
Yes	81	90%
No	9	10%
Total	90	100%

**Interpretation:**

Social media has taken over the world in every sense. In the field marketing, advertising brand building, promotions social media is the most sought after method adopted by entrepreneurs' young and old. 90% people agree with it but 10% of them still believe in the traditional way of marketing

Do you think social media marketing will help the firms to find their potential customer?

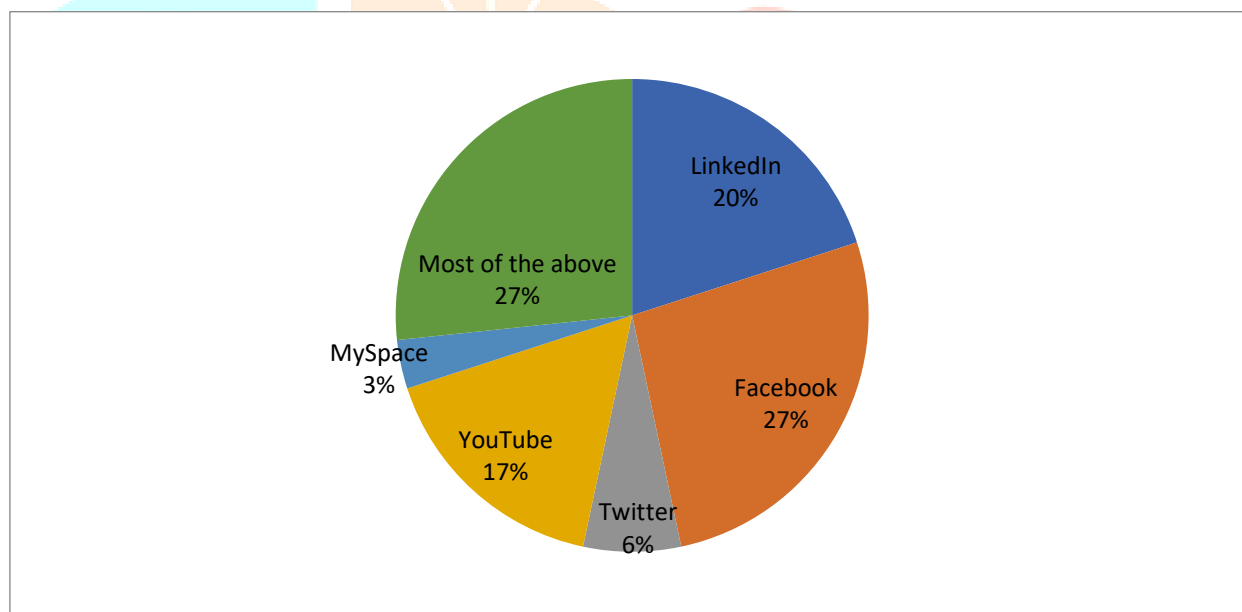
Options	Number of responses	Percentage
Yes	63	70%
No	9	10%
Maybe	18	20%
Total	90	100%

**Interpretation:**

Promotions and brand building must be done with people whom we think are potential customers for our business. This can be achieved by channelizing a greater part of promotion and advertising budget for activities such as networking, volunteering, hosting events and so on. Out of these methods, networking is the best that suits the need of the time. With the technological advancement in today's world, it is fairly easy to be connected with the outside world with the help of social networking sites. Yes, most of the people agree with it.

Which social networking site are you most familiar with?

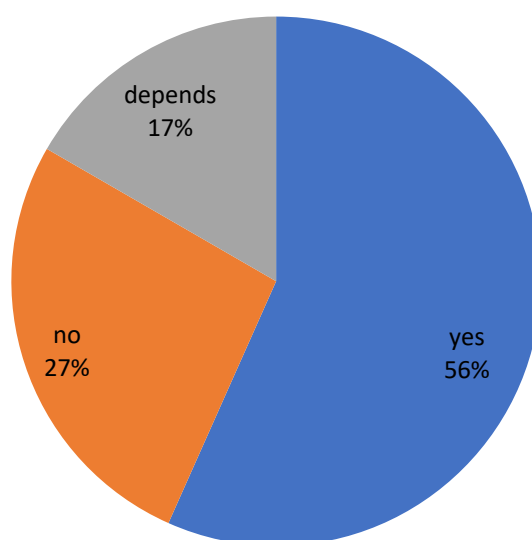
Options	Number of responses	Percentage
LinkedIn	18	20%
Facebook	24	27%
Twitter	6	7%
YouTube	15	17%
MySpace	3	3%
Most of the above	24	27%
Total	90	100%

**Interpretation:**

In today's world there are many social networking sites which are helpful for the mass marketing. The objectives of this question was to find the websites which is the most popular one. Most of the people are familiar with Facebook, LinkedIn then YouTube. Many of them are familiar with most of the social networking sites.

Do you think the relative cost is much lesser as compared with traditional advertising?

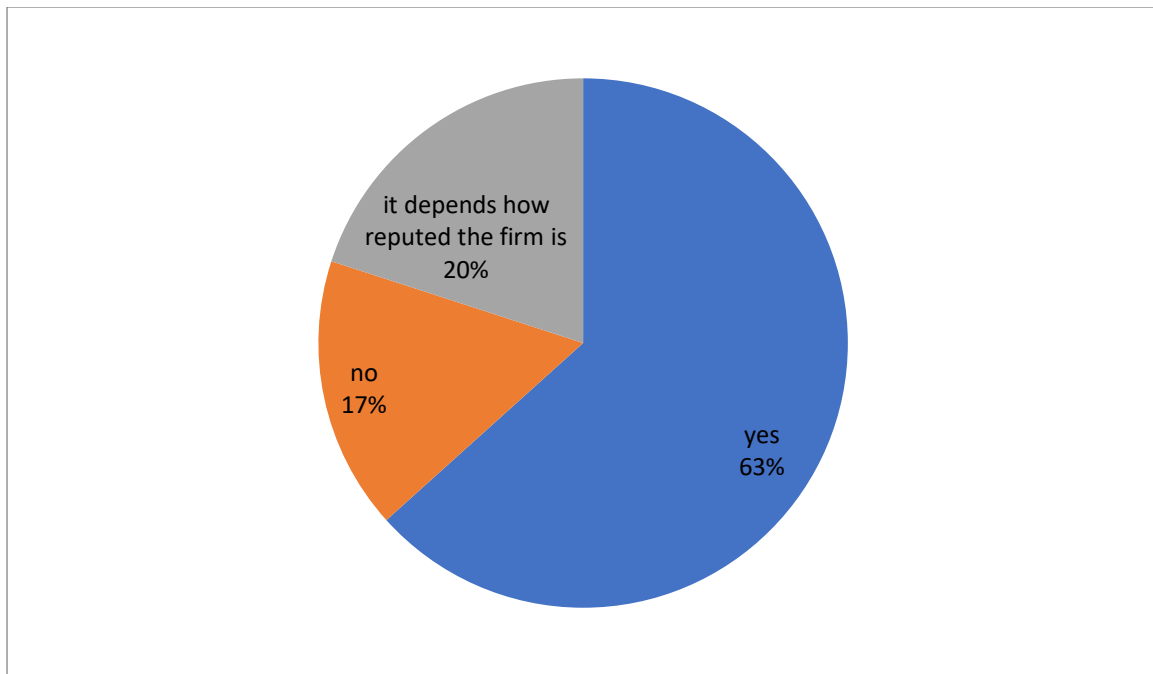
Options	Number of responses	Percentage
Yes	51	57%
No	24	27%
Depends	15	17%
Total	90	91%

**Interpretation:**

More than 50% people think relative cost is much lesser as compared with traditional advertising while more less then 30% think it is not. The studies say that the relative cost is lesser as compared the media marketing with traditional advertising.

Is social media helpful for B2B firms in generating new sales/clients?

Options	Numbers of responses	Percentage
Yes	57	63%
No	15	17%
It depends how reputed the firm is.	18	20%
Total	90	100%

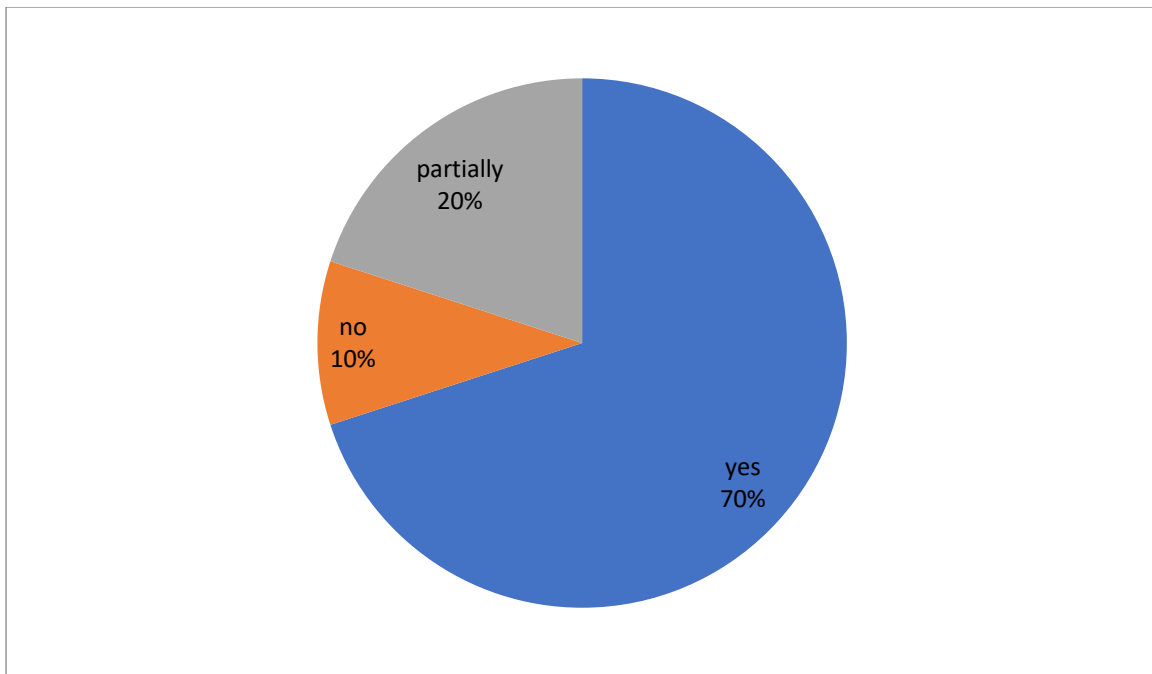


Interpretation:

Social media helpful for both B2B and B2C firms in generating new sales/clients. 63% of the people agree with it. While others think in B2B every think is taken place in a formal way sp it's not possible to generate new sales through the social media.

“Social media can be effectively used for various B2C clients to increase sales.” Do you agree?

Options	Number of responses	Percentage
Yes	63	70%
No	9	10%
Partially	18	20%
Total	90	100%

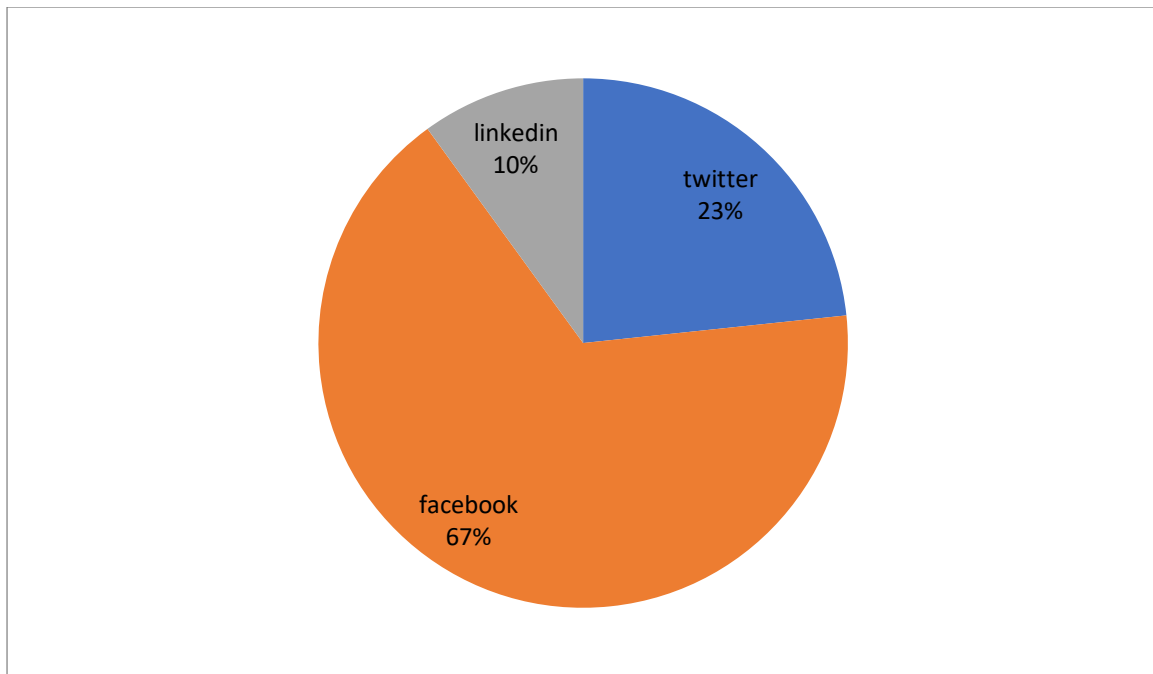


Interpretation:

70 of the people agree with this because most of the people are familiar with social networking sites and they frequently visit these sites.

Which one do you think is the most effective social networking site for online marketing?

Options	Number of responses	Percentage
Twitter	21	23%
Facebook	60	67%
LinkedIn	9	10%
Total	90	100%

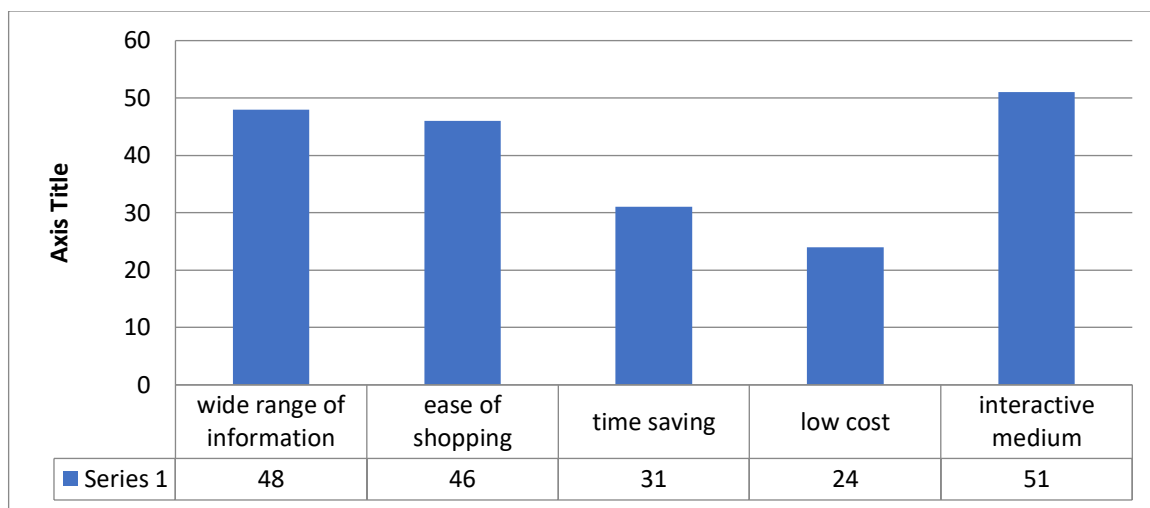


Interpretation:

It shows that most of the people are familiar with Facebook in comparison with other sites like Twitter and LinkedIn. Cab providers like oil cabs and taxi for sure are more active in twitter than Facebook. So it depends on different industries.

Benefits of online marketing offer over the traditional marketing:

	Frequency	Percent
Wide range of information	48	24.0%
Ease of shopping	46	23.0%
Time saving	31	15.5%
Low cost	24	12.0%
Interactive medium	51	25.5%
Total	200	100.0%



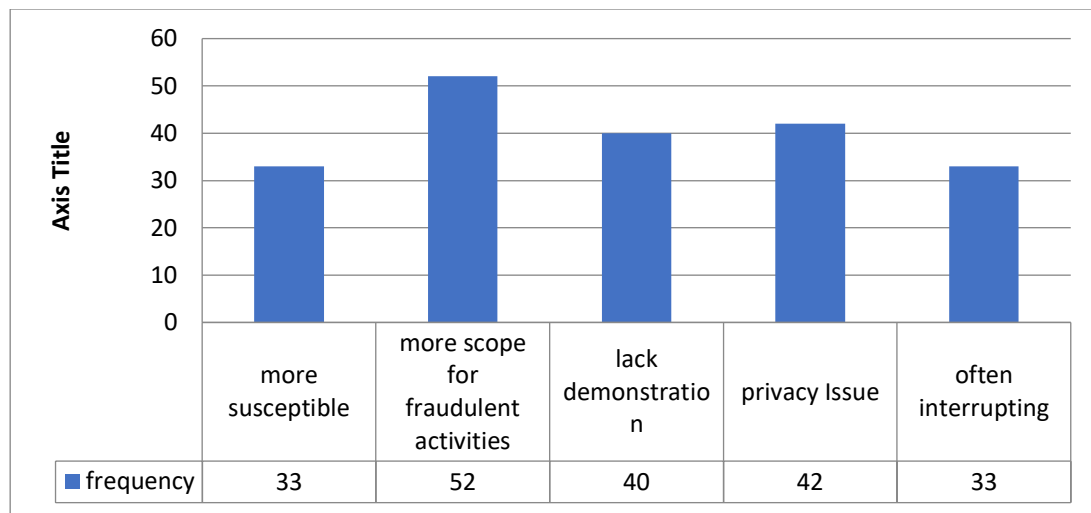
Interpretation:

- i. 24% of respondents find online marketing advantageous as it offers wide range of information about the brand,
- ii. 23% of respondents find online marketing advantageous as it offers ease of shopping.
- iii. 15.5% of respondents find online marketing advantageous as it saves consumer's time,
- iv. 12% of respondents find online marketing advantageous as it involve low cost in purchase,
- v. 25.5% of respondents find online marketing advantageous as it is an interactive medium.

It means majority of respondents favour for interactive ability of online marketing which is not applied in case of traditional mediums like print ads, television commercials or outdoor media.

Loopholes in online marketing over traditional marketing tools:

	Frequency	Percent
More susceptible	33	16.5%
More scope for fraudulent activities	52	26.0%
Lack demonstration	40	20.0%
Privacy Issue	42	21.0%
Often interrupting	33	16.5%
Total	200	100.0%

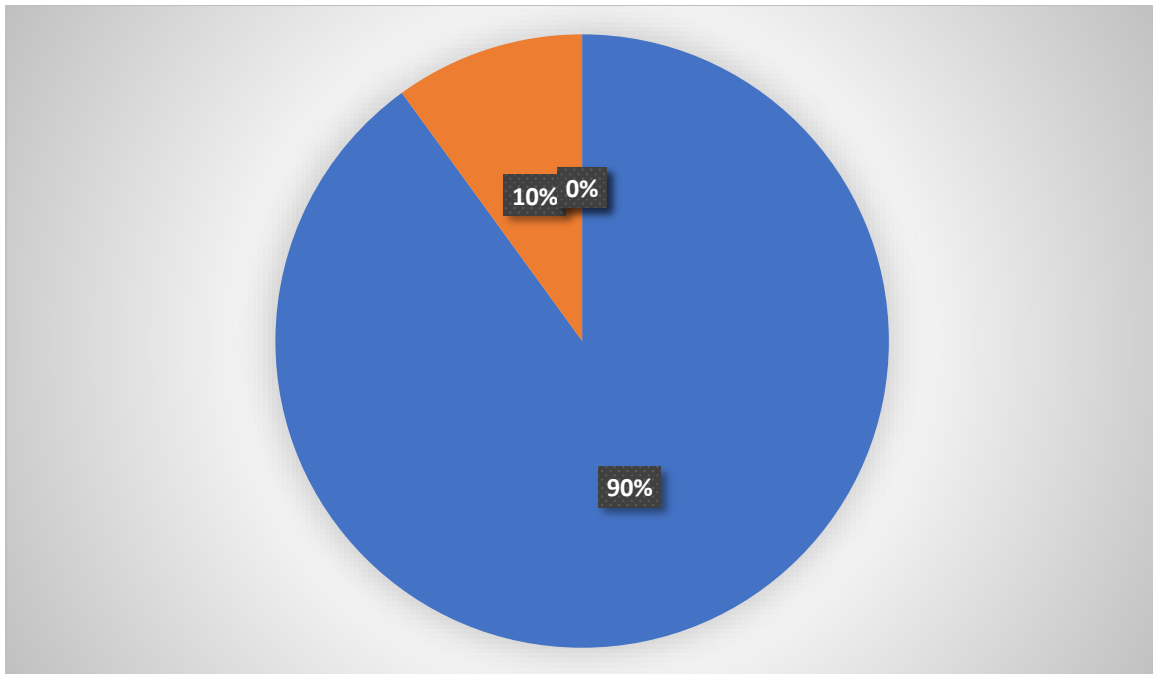


Interpretation:

- 16.5% of respondents find online marketing is not safe as it is more susceptible.
- 26% of respondents find online marketing is not safe as there is more scope of fraudulent activities.
- 20% of respondents find online marketing is not safe as it lacks demonstration
- 21% of respondents find online marketing is not safe as it may result in some serious privacy issues.
- 16.5% of respondents find online marketing is not safe as it is often interrupting.

Advertisements through social media are more interesting and attractive than traditional advertising.

Option	Number of responses	Percentage
Yes	81	90%
No	9	10%
Total	90	100%

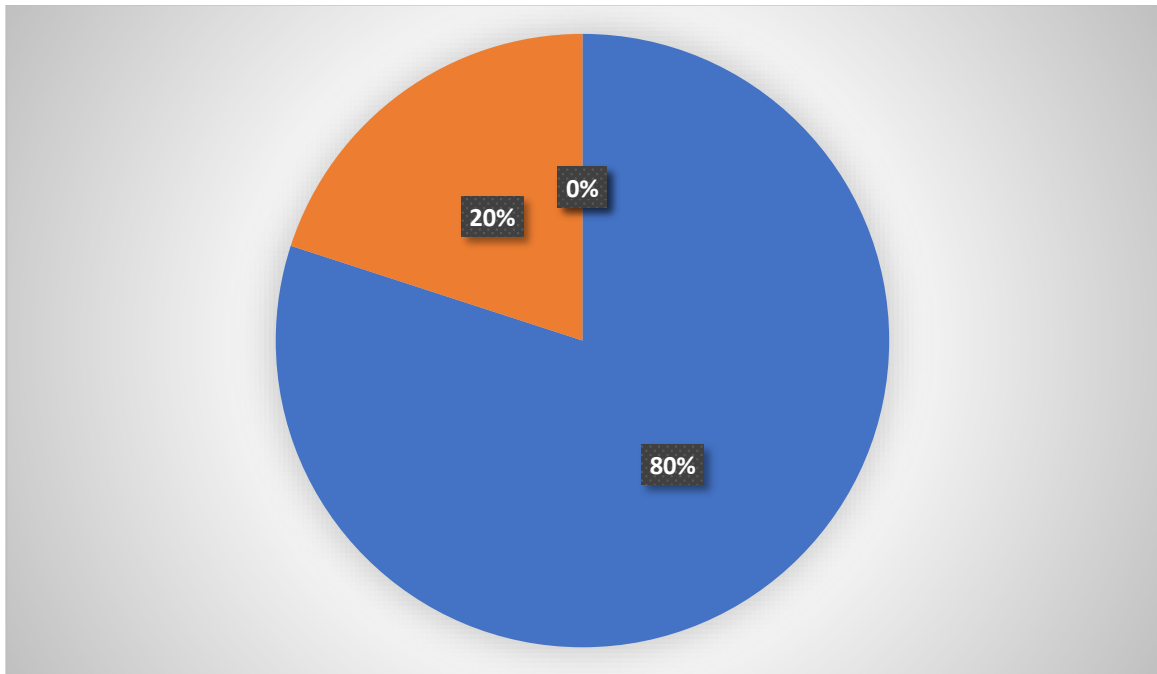


Interpretation:

Above pie chart depicts that women customers are agreeing with the statement that Advertisements through social media are more interesting than traditional advertising, which shows that marketers should move their promotional efforts from traditional tools to social media tools.

Social media advertisements are more interactive than traditional advertising.

Option	Percentage
Yes	80%
No	20%
Total	100%

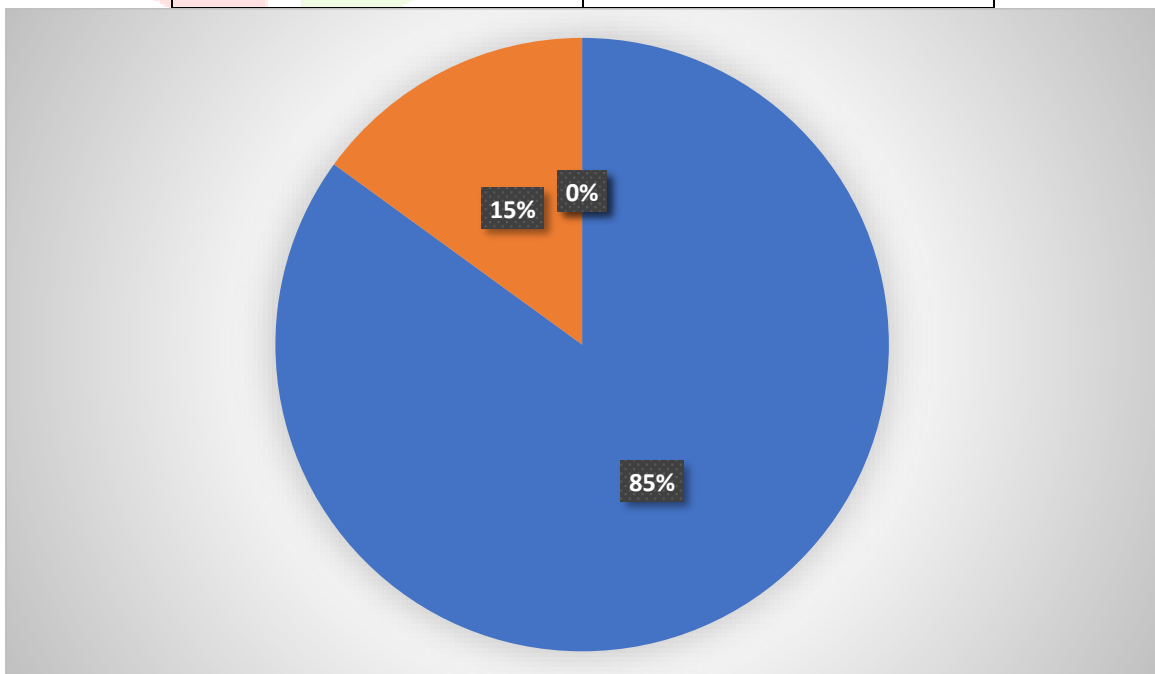


Interpretation:

Here it is clear from the above pie charts that customers believe that Social media advertisements are more interactive than traditional advertising. The more interaction with customers can motivate them more to purchase the advertised brand.

Organizations that use social media for marketing purposes are more innovative than others who are not using it.

Option	Percentage
Yes	85%
No	15%
Total	100%



Interpretation:

Innovation is highly needed to increase the market share and respondents are agreeing on the point that Organizations that use social media for marketing purpose are more innovative than others who are not using it.

CHAPTER-5**FINDINGS**

It is clear from the usage of social media for marketing has been embraced by businesses of all kinds. It is proved that business to business marketing and business to consumer marketing is possible and highly effective through the usage of social media especially Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. The next part of the report concentrates on how social media presence can be increased for business firms and how is it better than or worse than traditional advertising techniques. It also focuses on how social usage can enhance small businesses. Merely implementation of social media may not be useful for marketing. Thus, discussion how to measure the return on investment in social media will also be covered.

OTHER FINDINGS:

- Facebook and Whatsapp are observed as the most social networking applications.
- People use social networking sites for promoting business and have communities for their business.
- There are minimum people who have used marketing applications in the past.
- Majority of people who have used marketing applications in the past.
- Maximum people are attracted and came across to Web banner and Video ads.
- Most of the people sees advertisement of Facebook, Whatsapp and LinkedIn.

CONCLUSIONS

social media is working more as a search engine these days because people trust people rather trusting companies. Also people think that it would be cheaper to buy from the people directly rather than going to the company website. Hence, an area of interest is searched on a social media and concerned people are found and communicated with. Social media marketing creates a positive effect on many business markets such as financial institutions, travel and tourism businesses, retail businesses, knowledge business, entertainment industry, and so on. Since the process of social media marketing saves money, time and is highly engaging and interesting social media marketing seems to be the next big think to hit the world as a whole.

One of the biggest advantages of social media marketing as opposed to traditional advertising is that potential customers can be precisely targeted. For example, in Facebook, if a person specifies that his area of interest is interior designing; his home page would have advertisements of interior designers on it. Thus, it doesn't seem to be a hassle for the customer because they would definitely want to see those advertisements. As for the business owner, he/she needs to pay only if a person clicks on his/her advertisements. Thus it is a win-win situation for both the business owner and the customer.

Similarly small business start-up should utilize the endless opportunities provided by social media sites such as Facebook, twitter and LinkedIn. The biggest advantage for small business start-up is that the amount of money to be spent on advertisement can be massively cut down and brand building can be done effectively. As in LinkedIn which is customisable, more than one products being sold by the same company can also be marketed. This works perfectly for B2B clients who cater to more than one product from the same verticals.

In fact social media sites themselves are changing at a fast pace to keep up with the marketing trend that is present today. Though LinkedIn was started for professional networking, it has added much functionality recently which makes it an attractive platform for business development. Likewise although Facebook is considered as a medium for personal space, it is changing at a rapid pace to cater to the needs of business as well. More companies are trying to market their products through Facebook. Twitter is least preferred social networking websites used for business development.

Social media can emerge as best tool for brand promotion, if used efficiently.

Customers

have positive perception towards social media marketing practices; they consider social media advertising more interesting, innovative, informative and interactive as compare to traditional advertising. Social media is not only creating the awareness among customers about different brands but also playing important role in their purchase decision as the study shows that there is a significant relationship between awareness and preference of brands that are promoted on social media sites. But women customers are not comfortable in sharing their personal information on social media websites due to which social media web-site marketers may not get additional information about their prospective customers. To instill the confidence in the women customers they have to take extra steps to ensure that information shared by their prospects will be kept strictly confidential.

Thus study is significant for providing the baseline information and references for marketers to understand the psychology of women customers towards social media and make further strategies to enhance their customer base. A study with different sample size and in different locations may provide fruitful results to understand the perception of customers towards social media marketing practices. Further study can be conducted on women residing in the rural areas and the perception of rural women can be compared with the urban women perception towards social media to get the holistic approach of the topic.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From this report it can be concluded that social media presence is inevitable in the coming years. not only that social media is useful as a marketing tool, it has become the order of the day to be present in social media. Therefore this report recommends all kind of businesses small scale, large scale, business to business clients, business to consumer clients, manufacturing industries and so on to be actively present in the social media. An important fact to be kept in mind in this context is that most social networking sites have a cyclic growth. It starts from minimum, attains a maximum and goes down to a minimum again. Thus, this is the perfect time to invest time and resources in popular social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Owing to the relatively small amount of investment, it is not a high risk investment as the usage of social media will come to a minimum only gradually.

In comparison with traditional advertisement, social media marketing caters to a more focused group of people and thus can yield better results. This does not mean that companies should stop using traditional media and start using online and social media alone form advertisements. This may result in disastrous results. An important thing to be kept in mind is that we say one in every seven people are on Facebook, there can be millions of duplicate accounts and almost half of the total number of accounts is not being accessed every day. This limits the chance of meeting new prospects and thereby causes a hindrance for generating new business leads. Also still the remaining people of the world are relying on traditional media which means that we can't ignore them. Therefore the best solution is to combine both traditional and social media for marketing. This will bridge the gap between those people who are active on social media sites and those who are still relying on traditional media. Companies must be careful in selecting particular adverts for particular media. A company which sells clothes may have to rely on social media for advertising their people of the age group 15-50 whereas they still have to depend upon traditional advertisement like TV, radio and print media for the rest of the age group population. Thus effective combination of social media adverts and traditional adverts will results in better results.

The online presence of firms must be frequently updated and it must be linked with each other and with the company website. It must be maintained well and only relevant posts must be updated. Small business should embrace this wonderful technology and reap the benefits of being on the social media for marketing.

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QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: (Optional)

Gender:

- Male
 Female

Age:

- Below 18
 18-25
 25-35
 35-45
 45-65
 Above 65

Family Structure:

- Nuclear
 Joint

Which best describe your marital status:

- Married
- Widowed
- Bachelor
- Divorced

If Married, Is your Spouse is working:

- Yes
- No

If Married, No of Children's:.....

QNo.1) Do you think social media is the most sought after method adopted by entrepreneurs' young and old in the field of marketing, advertising, brand building, promotions?

- Yes
- No

QNo.2) What is the most effective solution for brand promotion?

- Social media
- Print media

QNo.3) Do you think social media marketing will help the firms to find their potential customers?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

QNo.4) Which social networking site are you most familiar with?

- LinkedIn
- Facebook
- Twitter
- YouTube
- My space
- Most of the above

QNo.5) Do you think the relative cost is much lesser as compared with traditional advertising?

- Yes
- No
- Depends

QNo.6) Is social media helpful for b2B firms in generating new sales/clients?

- Yes
- No
- It depends how reputed the firm is.

QNo.7) “Social media can be effectively used for various B2B clients to increase sales.” Do you agree?

- yes
- no
- partially

QNo.8) Which one do you think most effective social networking site for online marketing?

- Twitter
- Facebook
- LinkedIn

QNo.9) Do you follow your favourite brands on social networking sites like Facebook, twitter and LinkedIn?

- Yes
- No

QNo.10) If yes, why do you follow them?

- Just because you like those brands
- You're very keen to know about their new offering
- To know how well they are in marketing

QNo.11) What benefits does online marketing offer over the traditional marketing?

- Wide range of information
- Low cost
- Ease of shopping
- Interactive medium
- Time saving

QNo.12) What loopholes does online marketing carry over traditional marketing tools?

- More Susceptible
- Privacy Issue
- More scope for fraudulent activities
- Often interrupting