

How to Engage your customer through Social Media

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ABSTRACT

Everyone who is having access of internet is active on social media. Most of the people are active on social media for entertainment, fun & to interact with their friends and relatives. To understand how to engage their customer on social media is a big challenge in front of companies. Nowadays Small retailers and traders make their own page or join some group on facebook to interact with the customer without any idea how to engage their customer or server their customer on these social networking sites. The main motive of this research is to find out the encouragement factor to engage their customer. This research will be helpful for the marketing managers, retailers/ Traders while making their marketing strategy for social media platform, managers/retailers able engage their customer positively and use it as a method to increase sales and revenue through it.

Keywords: Customer Engagement, Social Media, Social Media Marketing, Two way communication,

1. Introduction

After Globalization in 1990, India faces a drastic change in their markets. International trade, high quality low prices good and services are easily available in the market. Due to increase in competition customers have the wide range of varieties to choose. To beat the competition the company should engage their customer with providing them special experience, so that the customers stay in touch with that company and also refer the brand to their friends and relative.

Web 2.0, Earlier it was called World Wide Web created by Tim Berners-lee in 1989, and become public in 1993. With the help of web 2.0, users are able to collaborate, communicate, create and share the content themselves (Ender, Hungenberg, Denker & Mauch, 2008) and customer can easily access the information about the product, price & services. Constantinides and Fountain (2008) define Web 2.0 “as a collection of open-source, interactive and user-controlled online applications expanding the experiences, knowledge and marketing power of the users as participants in business and social process supporting the creation of informed users’ networks facilitating the flow of ideas and knowledge by allowing the efficient generation, dissemination, sharing and editing/refining of information content”.

Earlier Television, Radio & Newspaper were only the source of media, to communicate their customer but in early 2000 Social media was introduced, it is just like another form of media used for communication with customer but through this social interaction is possible at large scale. Marketers are now able to interact with customer in a better way, solve their query and satisfied their need in real time.

Social Media Marketing is an ongoing procedure through which marketers generate, interface & deliver their marketing offers on social media platforms and build strong relations with customers by facilitating and

interacting with them. But how to engage their customer is a matter of concern, so in this study we analyse some factors, which marketers should have to consider while making their social media marketing strategy.

2. Literature review

Social media is a combination of various social networking sites and Facebook, Youtube & Twitter are most adopted social media platform worldwide.

S. Wildman (2015) defined the four principal attributes of Social Media.

“Social media services are (currently) Web 2.0 Internet-based applications, User-generated content is the lifeblood of social media, Individuals and groups create user-specific profiles for a site or app designed and maintained by a social media service, Social media services facilitate the development of social networks online by connecting a profile with those of other individuals and/or groups”

Author	Customer engagement definitions
Hollebeek (2011)	“consumers’ proactive contributions in co-creating their personalized experiences and perceived value with organizations through active, explicit, and ongoing dialogue and interactions”
Vivek (2012)	“The intensity of an individual’s participation and connection with the organisation’s offering and activities initiated by either the customer or the organisation.”
Patterson (2006)	“The level of a customer’s physical, cognitive and emotional presence in their relationship with a service organisation.”
Brodie (2011)	“A motivational state that occurs by virtue of interactive, co-creative customer experiences with a focal agent/object (e.g. a brand) in focal service relationships.”
Bowden (2009)	“A psychological process that models the underlying mechanisms by which customer loyalty forms for new customers of a service brand, as well as the mechanisms by which loyalty may be maintained for repeat purchase customers of a service brand.”

T. naidoo (2011) in his research finds that with the emergence of social media marketing the marketers able to communicate or interact with customers in a personalized manner, which is not possible through traditional marketing. Activeness on social media automatically grabs the attention of customer.

R. Kaushik (2012) state that social media play the role of a bridge between customers and companies and at the same time marketers become more liable towards their customers, because they are directly dealing with their customer and if customer finds the information on social media not relevant than the chances of losing the customer are high.

Bowden, J.L.H. (2009) Through Internet customers now have easy access to variety of product so loyalty considered as a great challenges for the marketers. To retain the customer is not much expensive rather than attract them and this is the real challenge in front of marketers. Because of easy access of internet customer find

it easy to search various products and offers available. It means that to be successful, a company has to create “an intimate long-term relationship with the customer”

Guo (2016). When customers interact and participate in the conversation posting by the brand on social media is customer engagement. Barger (2016). Liking, comment, sharing the content with others, posting review about product on social media, all are the part of interaction through social media.

C.M Sashi (2012), recommended that buying decision of a customer could be effected by social media activities, the fast spreading electronic word of mouth. Positive customer reviews have good impact on other customers also, which leads to purchase decision and generate revenue for the company.

Xia Wang, Chunling & Yujie Wang (2012), in their study “Social Media Peer Communication and Impacts on Purchase Intentions: A Consumer Socialization Framework” confirmed that peer communication through social media affect the purchase decision of consumer. Author also stated that the purchase intention of customer about a product is mostly depends on the level of their engagement. Purchase intention play a major role since it is what encourage consumer buying decisions and which leads to sales and profit to a company.

Wei Jia Tan (2013), in this research the author attempted to analyze the customer attitude regarding interactive advertising and its effect on their purchase intention. The result found that there is a correlation between attitude towards advertisement & purchase intention to effectiveness of interactive advertising. Traditional advertisement might be used by the marketers, but interactive advertising should be an option.

Smith, Peregrina (2016), “Social Network Marketing: A Segmentation Approach to Understanding Purchase Intention” stated that buying behavior is a response towards pre-purchasing inspiration and this inspiration is what gives the customer a sensation of buying a product or service. The inspirations before purchasing are therefore observed as the intention of buying a product and thus called the purchase intention. The author further defines purchase intention as “A consumer's subjective judgment in the decision-making process after a general evaluation has identified a willingness to act towards a product or brand”.

Gupta (2016), stated that because of easy access of information about the products, customer reviews and two-way communication, the social media is having a positive impact on consumers buying behavior, Social media also provide the customers with a number of networks to evaluate and compare alternatives (Song & Yoo 2016).

Elwalda (2016) claimed that when the consumers evaluate information related to the product, before purchasing the product, he/she depends on trust on recommendation from friends or relatives more than interacting with brand online. peer review is considered as the most trusted information about the brands online & through this customer evaluate the information regarding the product before doing any purchase.

In their study Kontu & Vecchi (2014) finds that with the advent of social media the customer enrich with more control and power which is not possible earlier, open communication on social media allow customer to share their views which affect the opinion and attitude of others.

Margrath & McCormick (2013) state that customer feels entertaining and satisfied while sharing the content on social media. According to author price promotion is an effective tool & having positive attitude toward customer purchase intention. Offers and discount available online motivate the customer & helps in increasing sales or revenue.

According to we are social in January 2018 there are about 3.196 billion social media users worldwide which is 13 % up as compare to 2017.

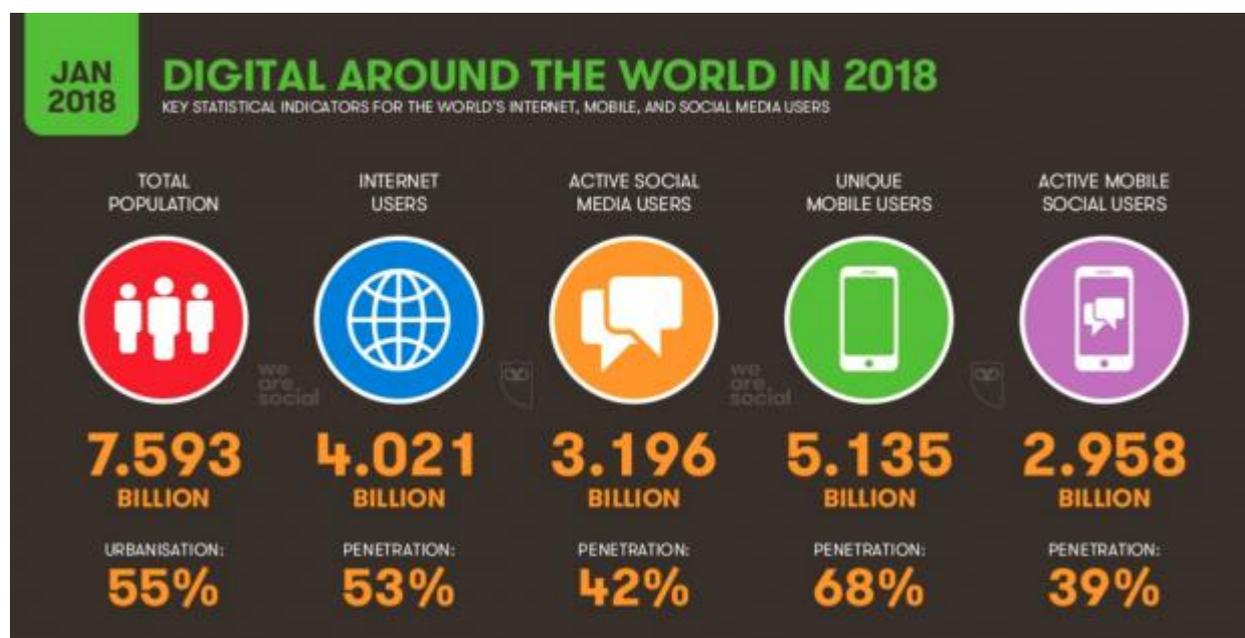


Fig. 1 Source: <https://wearesocial.com/blog/2018/01/global-digital-report-2018>

3. Need of study

Social Media provides great opportunities to companies or marketers to connect and communicate with customer in real time. But customer engagement becomes an issue for companies and loyalty also a major concern, due to availability of various different products & offers on internet, customer are not remain loyal to a single product or brand. In his Study TrackMaven finds that the content on social media increased by 35% through various social media sites but customer engagement decreased by 17% at the same time. (TrackMaven 2016).

As per a report by we are social 34 % Indians are using Internet out of them 19 % are active on social media. An average Indian spent about 7 hours on internet in a day out of them 3 hr. on social media. According to this report Indians are top user of social media with 250 million users. The increasing presence of social media in

India gives an active advantage to marketers to engage their customer through social media. So a study is required to understand how to engage their customer or server their customer on these social networking sites.

4. Significance of the study

This research will be helpful for the marketing managers, retailers/ Traders while making their marketing strategy for social media platform. Managers/retailers able engage their customer positively and use it as a method to increase sales and revenue through it.

5. Objective of the study

Companies now start to allocate a portion of their marketing budget to social media marketing. Retailers and traders start posting about their product on social media without any planning or without any marketing strategy. The main purpose of any company any business is to retain their customer or engage their customer or prospected customer, which in future convert into sales and generate revenue for the company.

6. Research Methodology

This Study is based on secondary data. We review the existing literature on social media marketing and customer engagement to gain the better understanding of the concept and to identify the motives to engage the customer on social media.

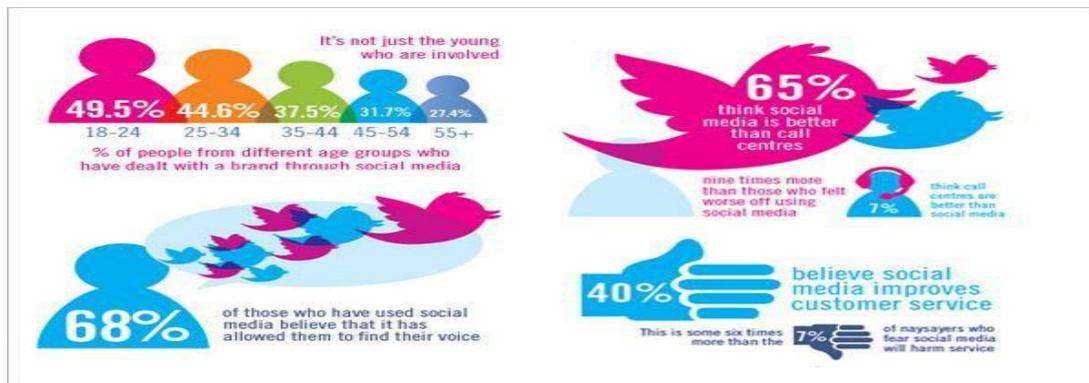


Fig. 2 Source: <https://beeketing.com/blog/leverage-customer-service-as-a-powerful-marketing-channel/>

7. Customer Engagement

7.1 Respond to comments/query

It is not possible to interact or respond to the query of all the active followers on social media. But marketers should make continuous efforts to respond to all the query, questions and comments of their followers on time, which surely help in increasing customer engagement and customer become loyal towards their brand.

7.2 Interaction with customer

Social media strategy should be more interactive through posting contests, real time information, respond to each and every comments just saying thank you. Through this they assure that there is someone to hear them and their query. These little things help in improving the brand value and loyalty.

7.3 Provide the solution of their problem

Post such the contents that solve their problem helps directly engage with their customer and build a good relationship with them. Attention & consideration are two pillars of brand loyalty, if the marketers are attentive towards their customer comments, only then customer will attentive about companies' brand.

7.4 Post user generated contents

Rather than creating or posting your own making content, ask your followers what they want to see. If the content is of customer interest they enjoy to reading your posted content and get engage with that. Customers any share those content which they find relevant, so be ensure to post only relevant content on your social media page.

7.5 Post entertaining content

Entertainment is one of the main motives of customer to get engage. Content should be full of entertaining or funny videos, images rather than just a promotional message about the company or the product.

7.6 Provide offers & rewards

Special offers, rewards or discount motivate customer to follow the brand and get engage with brand. Reward could be in term of monetary or non monetary. People share these kind of information regarding receiving and reward, discount coupons with others as compare to other information about the products.

7.7 Solve their problem in real time

Try to solve the problems of your followers in real time, marketers can use chat box option for this. Because of varieties of product available in market and if the customer could not find the solution of their problem there are the high chances that they switch to other brand or substitute to fulfill their needs.

8. Discussion

Social media is widespread day by day with increasing number of users worldwide in social networks. With the help of social media consumers able to connect or communicate directly with marketers, which was not possible in traditional marketing strategies. Through a positive two way communication social media helps to engage the company and consumers and this engagement could encourage the purchase intention of the customer. To increase the brand awareness is among the most important goal of a company through social media and engagement is considered as a precious tool to increase brand awareness. How much followers or fan a brand is having is no of use if they are not able to engage their customer at the desired level. Engagement helps in built strong relationship with customers. Liking or sharing the content influence the view of others about the brand or company, if the audience finds content relevant they like, share and recommend that to their peer also. Customer are free to hide your post, put it into spam or hide all the post posted by the company from their page, so the content should be relevant, and don't irritate the audience by posting continuously bored messages, always try to post something new and in a entertaining form. Social media engagement has a positive impact of ROI and increase sales and revenue

9. Conclusion

Customer engagement is a big challenge in front of companies, this is only the customer engagement which leads to brand awareness on social media. If audiences are not engaging towards the content posted by the companies then there is no use of having presence on social media. Social media is one of the cheapest tools of advertising and beneficial for new retailers who cannot afford big budget to advertise their product. Retailers should keep focus on their marketing strategies to serve the customer in a better way and beat the competition. Continuously communicating with the customers, resolve their query on time, provide them better services, offer them discount, keep them updated about the new products, serve them in real time, posting relevant and entertaining comments are some major point to be considered while making your social media strategies. If new retailer finds it difficult, they can take the help from the paid agencies for writing the content and make their social media page more attractive.

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