

The Role of Innovative Content in Social Media Marketing to Drive Engagement and Generate Desired Buzz around Brands in Indian Market.

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Abstract

Social media is not just a phenomenon but a fundamental shift in the way people communicate, consume their information, interact, make decisions and buy. Having a social media presence goes far beyond just having a Facebook page or a Twitter id today. It's all about content, conversations, human connections, communication, engagement, sharing, participating, listening and so much more. The ability to constantly create compelling content becomes instrumental in drawing the right target audiences and making the brand more visible. Content is the Mojo of the social web. Social media channels including LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Foursquare, Word Press, Google Plus and more can fall into place if there is substantial fuel for sparking conversations, discussion & interest around what a brand is looking to promote. This paper examines how effective are content strategy and social media engagement in creating the desired buzz around a brand or a business. In this paper, with the aid of secondary research and regular observation of the current happenings in digital marketing, intangible elements of social media marketing, like compelling content, key engagement drivers, wooing the audience, creating sustainable brands, relationship with target audience etc. are studied. Also, few brands have been studied in detail to understand the digital innovations they have adopted to achieve desirable results.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Social Media, Target Audience, Social Media Channels, Content Strategy, Social Media Engagement, Brand Buzz, Digital Marketing, Engagement Driver, Brand Sustainability, Digital Innovation.

Introduction

Businesses today have accepted that “Social Media Marketing” is a powerful phenomenon that must be taken advantage of while it’s still in the spotlight. **Social media marketing**, or SMM, is a form of internet marketing that implements various social media networks in order to achieve marketing communication and branding goals. It primarily covers activities involving social sharing of content, videos, and images that helps a brand gain website traffic and desired attention. SMM centers on efforts to create content that attracts attention and encourages readers to share it across their social networks. The resulting electronic word of mouth (eWoM) refers to any statement consumers share via the Internet (e.g., web sites, social networks, instant messages, news feeds) about an event, product, service, brand or company. When the underlying message spreads from user to user and presumably resonates because it appears to come from a trusted, third-party source, as opposed to the brand itself, it results in earned media rather than paid media.

SMM will continue to have a significant impact in 2015 on marketers, hence they are making it a part of their marketing and PR mix. They now have the ability to reach out and communicate on a personal level with their target audience on a daily basis. This is very powerful and has never been available with traditional marketing and hence a game changer

Literature review

Social Media Scenario: Indian Context

According to media reports, Indian organizations use social media much more than the global average and their counterparts in emerging economies. The 2013 Social Media Examiner’s year ending report says 86% of marketers believe social media is important for their business and 89% of marketers believe that increased exposure was the number one benefit of social media marketing. A study by eMarketer (a US-based independent market research firm) says,

more Indians are increasingly logging into Facebook and Twitter accounts, with the country recording the highest social networking growth of 37.4 percent in 2013. Though the growth rate of social network users may be slowing globally, there is no stopping in India, as the number of social media users in urban market is projected to cross a whopping 80 million this year.

With the second largest Facebook user base outside the US, India is expected to have the largest Facebook population in the world by 2016. About half the social-media savvy organizations spend one to five per cent of their marketing budgets on social media. As many as 74 per cent of the organizations use a specialized digital agency, not a public relations or ad agency, to figure and use social media. LinkedIn has picked up in a big way and has 20 million users only from India, which is 9 percent of its total membership. Also, major image centric networks have emerged like – Pinterest, Tumblr, Instagram, Facebook, and now Google and Twitter, that are redefining photo posting experience and engagement. This movement from text to photo/image in social media has been boon for B2C marketing for e-commerce industry. In India, Pinterest and Tumblr are the fastest growing social networks in at 589% and 130% per year, according to ComScore India digital report 2013. Today, marketers are taking social media more seriously with focus on quality content, engagement and conversations, making it excessively important like never before. This directly means, now focus on engagement and building community is highly important, and monetization and ROI isn't a big issue.

A survey by Social-Media-Marketing-India-Trends-study-2013 has thrown up some good insights of social media marketing practices among various social media-savvy organisations in India.

The most preferred social media platforms:

- Facebook is the most important platform for marketers in India for engaging customers, followed by Twitter, YouTube and Blogging.
- Almost half of the social media-savvy organizations are already using emerging platforms such as Pinterest, Google Plus, and Foursquare.
- More than half of the social media-savvy organizations surveyed regularly engage with bloggers or online influencers who have authority and strong following.

Formula to ensure greater Engagement using social media communities:

- Type of content : A majority of social media savvy organizations prefer to post generic updates instead of brand updates.
- Frequency of updates and responses: Social media-savvy organizations posts multiple updates a day.
- Majority of social media-savvy organizations respond to fan queries within 30 to 60 minutes on Twitter and within 30 minutes to a few hours on Facebook.
- Contests/promotions: Picture contests are the most popular contests among social media-savvy organizations in India — most contests are organized monthly.
- Tools used: Many social media-savvy organizations in India use tools for online monitoring, online reputation management, response management, or managing social media platforms.

- Social media for research: Almost half of the social media-savvy organizations in India have conducted research using social media tools to get customer feedback and understand more about customer behaviour.
- Mobile: Half of the social media-savvy organizations in India have created mobile phone apps and one-fourth plans to create one.

Measuring social media success:

- 81% of the social media-savvy organizations surveyed said that they measure their social media efforts through platform-specific parameters such as likes, people talking about this, etc.
- 46.7% of the organizations surveyed said they have not measured revenue from their social media efforts.
- On the positive side, some organizations are already measuring social media efforts through leads, sentiment, brand visibility and have seen increase in revenue from social media efforts.

With this we clearly understand how vital a role SMM plays in the success of any business, some of the definitive benefits are listed below:

- Increase exposure
- Increase website traffic
- Improve search ranking
- Generate leads and Conversions
- Grow business partnerships
- Reduce marketing expenses
- Improve sales
- Provide marketplace insight
- Brand awareness
- Creating a brand identity and positive brand association
- Communication and interaction with key audiences

Objective of the study

For a business to thrive in today's digitally equipped world, it has become extremely important to engage followers or fans with quality content that is both relevant and meaningful. Using the mode of extensive secondary research and observation, this study revolves around the following:

“The role of content strategy and social media engagement in creating the desired buzz around a brand or a business.”

The purpose of content marketing is to engage with audience, to educate and inform. So let us understand what do marketers mean by content?

The concept of Content

Content on social media comes in many forms, like an infographic, a video, an image or sharing a blog post. Even the most basic tweet can be classed as content. The aim of content is to be engaging enough to be shared by a target audience, with the objective of driving beneficial consumer action. Many media frenzy marketers rush to open fan pages for brands,

expecting engagement rates to spike, but that will translate to engagement and further a positive relationship only when there are quality conversations and not just promotions. While advertising focuses on the USP of the product, content marketing focuses on the utility or entertainment value to consumers and needs to be always-on. Every good conversation needs stimulus and that can be in the form of inspiring and entertaining content from brands. Having social presence without engaging content is akin to having an open telephone line without much to say and therefore the consumer would hang up quickly. Now there is growing recognition, that an effective way to drive engagement over social channels, is to have meaningful content that generates conversation between brands and consumers.

Content Marketing

Content marketing is a technique of creating valuable, relevant and consistent content to attract and acquire targeted audience with the point of driving profitable customers. **The magic lies in telling a story that resonates with your audience and finding relevant channels to deliver it.** The internet and social media outlets have made content consumption possible at a huge scale with inbuilt attributes of sharing and thereby the potential to go viral at tremendous speed.

Business Objectives of Content Marketing

Marketing is ongoing process which goes along with competition and changes. Important question is how to be constantly visible to the target audience so they can find the brand when they search online? Content marketing is the answer. But if people are bombarded with dizzying quantities of content it can be tiresome, frustrating and can push audience elsewhere. It's therefore imperative that content is valuable and comes in digestible amounts. **By placing the user at the centre, we** use the basis of human relationships as a guide to create a constant connection and wow the user with quality and in turn be rewarded with loyalty and real-engagement. In an interview with CEO Speaks recently, Pradeep Chopra (CEO, Digital Vidya) says that most of the businesses underestimate the importance of content. Digital marketing requires a continuous flow of high quality content to engage target audience in relevant conversations. Since businesses don't give required importance to content and conversations, they fail to meet success.

Brands are focusing on Content Strategy, Content Development and Content Marketing for Social Media

In 2013 content driven social media marketing emerged and the dominant topics and concept revolved around politics, current issues, Alok Nath, Arvind Kejriwal, memes, music, celebrities, movies etc. The content type ranged from text, image, audio and video. Latest trending topics are from politics, entertainment and news industry, and content type range from Micro-Video, interactive, infographics, GIFs, mobile-content and videos that are extensively made viral. For instance, the video by Coca Cola (Coca-Cola Small World Machines - Bringing India & Pakistan Together) went viral on YouTube, Facebook and Twitter, generating millions of views across all devices.

Another intelligent mode of content marketing is "blogging" that is being explored by brands to engage their audience. Blog is the content publishing platform, where brands can redirect audience from social media. It plays a big role in content strategy and SEO by helping to

engage audience and increase rank on Google. Google's algorithm takes in to account of social signals such as likes, shares, tweets etc. while listing the blog on Google search. Through blog, marketers are trying to generate leads out of the traffic by using subscriptions, engagement, sharing and other conversion tactics. In India, businesses/brands are understanding the importance of blogging therefore we've many large players such as Myntra, Snapdeal, Infosys, MakeMyTrip etc. are blogging to build brand loyalist.

Viral video marketing is also another tool that builds brand engagement and creates brand advocates out of followers. Currently brands are embracing this strategy and innovating video production in comedy, infotainment, edutainment, entertainment etc. to capture the audience's attention. Indians have huge appetite for video, according to ComScore, as video consumption has doubled in two years to 3.7 billion videos per month.

Findings

Here are some general rules marketers should keep in mind for a successful run

1. Compelling Content is the key

If a brand has to bust the clutter, their content has to be original as generic content online is considered 'noise'. The content has to be relevant, well produced and unique enough to grab audience attention and make them choose to consume and share. Some brands take attention-grabbing seriously, for example the new Nescafe ad that portrays the story of a struggling stand-up comedian who stammers. With over 290K views this viral hit is a clear illustration of using interesting but unrelated content, packaged with unique creativity to deliver a punch.

2. Offer an idea, audience will build the story

In content marketing, stories are prepared both in advance as well as dynamically as and when required. A brand can only kick off an idea and set it into motion, if it is powerful enough, then users carry it forward.

Intel's "Beauty Inside" campaign is a perfect example of users shaping a story. In a beautifully emotive video, Intel started the story of Alex who wakes up every morning in a new body and hence is not able to build a meaningful relationship with anyone. The brand then allowed every fan of the video to play the part of Alex and act out his vulnerabilities and identity crisis. Hundreds of fans linked up their web cam videos and got a chance to be a part of this movie which proudly says "Starring... **the audience**". The central idea which got everyone talking is of course "What matters is what's inside?" inspired by "Intel Inside". The video stories earned 73 Million views and over 26 million interactions.

3. Think 'audience' not just 'consumers'

Building an audience and earning that authority, needs a lot of ground work in building credibility and confidence. For a brand, it is a greater challenge, as the consumer is aware of the purchase-intent agenda at the bottom of the funnel and is likely to be skeptical till they discover a 'real' reason to connect.

4. Brand and Beyond:

To draw in users, a brand needs to stand up for something which is larger than itself. For instance, when Nike ran its Game On initiative, the brand did not talk about their awesome

shoes, but showcased how regular folks could get fitter and start running marathons. Users started flocking to the platform to talk about their own experiences, achievements and ended up creating a community that stood for fitness. With 8.5 million users it is a hugely followed branded content platform.

5. Quality Content drives Engagement:

Producing quality social media content ensures fans that organically promote or advocate through engagement. Since engagement, whether it be a share, a retweet, a like, is the lifeblood of social media, thus it's crucial that the content is good. There needs to be a focus on brands and businesses understanding their audience and producing content that will cause more people to advocate their brand and drive engagement to reach a wider audience.

Social Media Marketing Objectives:

All contents are not profitable and they always need continual optimization. The ultimate goal of social media marketing is not only to create the company profile at social media website but also to reach the audience. We can set multiple objectives including branding, social media market research, find clients and influence word of mouth etc. but in the long run we can say that content marketing and social media marketing are two important part of digital marketing and every business needs to get involved with them for success and sustainability.

Following are few successful brands and their content innovation overview

1. Philips

Philips India launched a digital campaign 'Husband Initiated Movement' or 'HIM', in a move to spread awareness about breast cancer that urged men to ensure that their wives take a 10-minute breast self examination once every month and in-return they can complete a chore for them like cooking, babysitting etc. They created a website where participants uploaded selfies of them performing chores on their social networks – Facebook, Instagram, Twitter with the #HIMInitiative and the winners on gaining maximum likes/ favorites, got a Philips Airfryer. They got tremendous response on this interactive campaign and their purpose of highlighting the new product was profitably met.

2. Rice Bucket Challenge

RiceBucketChallenge is the Indian desi twist to #IceBucketChallenge on Social Media. **Manju Latha Kalanidihi**, a journalist from Hyderabad came up with the idea of feeding the hungry rather than wasting water in a country with scarce supply. She posted the challenge, seeking friends to cook or buy a bucketful of rice or feed the poor in the locality or donate medicines worth Rs.100 to the nearest government hospital. Participants had to post a picture of the donation on Facebook/Twitter along with the hashtag #RiceBucketChallenge and nominate friends for challenge. In just 5 days they got 34K+ mentions including tweets, posts, news articles which is an extremely good response.

3. Café Coffee Day

Cafe Coffee Day (CCD), one of India's largest coffee conglomerate were amongst the first to be part of the World Cup 2014 as they created a quiz about football for the fans and started leveraging #Worldcup 2014 on Twitter. CCD decided to talk about football, engage with audience by this integration and got an effective start. They held a football quiz a day before

the world cup. Contestants followed @CafeCoffeeDay page on Twitter, used the hashtag #CCDFootballQuiz, 10 winners were given Rs.1000 worth moments card from CCD. It increased both online engagement and elevated footfalls in their coffee shops.

4. Dell India

Dell India celebrated and capitalized on the Festival season on Social Media with #HintAGift. The campaign was designed around the concept of festival gifting. Dell India created a Facebook App where the users were asked to tag and leave hints (audio, video, picture or letter) to their loved ones about why they need a Dell Inspiron. The Facebook campaign ran for a month and the winner got a new Dell Inspiron. The application used tried and tested mechanism of voting the favorite hint and gaining virality among the fans. This effort of connecting with people and celebrating the festive spirit through a simplistic campaign on social media definitely worked for Dell.

Conclusion

Although social media marketing is a relatively recent concept in India, it has redefined the way businesses are implementing marketing campaigns and is the future. Social media today is not an option but a necessity for every industry. With the online medium providing mass reach and low cost benefits, businesses must creatively use social media marketing and come up with innovative campaigns to reach out to customers and build a successful brand. Though measures such as sales and leads are not very evident for all organizations, digitally savvy brands have realized the important role it plays in generating insights and engaging with customers on a continued basis. Social media has helped organizations to create their own communities of fans, customers or prospects. For any social media marketing to be rewarding in the long run, companies need to continuously find creative ways to engage with the customers. Social media marketing, when done right, can lead to more customers, more traffic, and more conversions, and it is definitely here to stay.

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