

## **SOCIAL MEDIA AS AN ENABLER OF MARKETING STRATEGIES**

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***Abstract:** Social media is now coming up as an effective tool for marketing. Even small business organizations are taking attempts to expand their business by reaching larger customer base. Today social media is vastly used by many businesses to promote their websites, products or services through online process. Social media marketing has changed the traditional form of marketing from one-to-one marketing to one-to-many marketing and many-to-many marketing. This interactive way of marketing has attracted the interests of large communities online. It connects service providers, companies and organizations with a broad audience of influencers and consumers. That is why for the success of a business, the social media presence on the web is very much essential for reaching out to consumers and establishing brand. The present study throws light on making better marketing strategies using social media and also gives information regarding various social media platforms and their uses by the business organizations.*

***Key words:** Social media marketing; Marketing Strategies.*

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Emergence of social media has totally changed the traditional form of marketing and has given new and interactive way of marketing technique. This in turn has improved the business organizational performance in terms of sales and revenue generation. The influence of social media to great extent is responsible for the globalization of the business. Thus, globalization effect and improved organizational performance contribute significantly to the development of the economic condition of any nation. Contribution is one aspect of social media that has never seen a downturn. Hence the study of social media is very essential today as it is still in nascent phase.

With the advent of web 2.0, the internet connection has become largely participatory in nature. It facilitates users not only to read but also to contribute content freely. One of the popular application of web 2.0 includes Social Networking Sites (SNS) (Chua and Banerjee, 2015). Today SNS has facilitated an indispensable communication tool for people to connect and stay in touch. It provides a suitable platform where social

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media users can create online communities, share information, ideas, personal messages, and other contents. There is a sharp increase in the popularity of the SNS such as Facebook, Twitter, Link In, YouTube, and Google+ and so on. The consistent increase in the use of social media has influenced to great extent the intervention of the business organizations worldwide since most of their existing and prospective customers are connected to the social media. This process of marketing that provides a global-scale interaction between the business and its stakeholders and customers through the virtual networks and communities, gives rise to the concept of social media marketing. With the help of social technology, the dissemination of the information or the content moves across the whole world without any boundary and content constraints. Now a days people want to share and exchange their experience and knowledge online, which marketers see as an outstanding opportunity to build relationships with their consumers and to increase awareness about their businesses to the larger scale. More than half of all businesses have established their social media presence and continuously pursue engaging their customer base on the SNS.

The growing popularity of SNS has brought to the attentions of the business organisations. Some of the motivation factors that can gain attention of the prospective buyers are entertainment, convenience and need to maintain relationships. This initiates the urge for the research on how SNS can be used by businesses for marketing purposes. The popularity of SNS suggests that these websites can be a suitable platform for businesses to strengthen relationship with potential customers in SNS community (Chua and Banerjee, 2015). For this purpose, brand page could be created and brand related posts could be uploaded in SNS by businesses. As a result, interested customers could become fans of the brand pages by expressing their opinion about brand-posts through various online activities such as liking, commenting and sharing that are provided in most of the SNS. Every businesses want to attract large volume likes, comments and shares since it is the indicator of popularity and greater exposure among the customers (Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013; De Vries, Gensler & Leeftang, 2012; Sabate, Berbegal-Mirabent, Cañabate & Leberherz, 2014). Although businesses make large number of brand fans on their brand page, the success of their business is not guaranteed. Although businesses have large number of customer base, but still they are grappling with few questions such as: what social media tactics are most effective? What are the best ways to engage audience with social media? How to measure return on social media marketing? How to find target audience with social media? (Social media marketing industry report, 2015). Today, due to globalization, the competition in market has become a matter of great challenge. In order to survive in the cut-throat competition in the market, the marketers need to adopt new ways of marketing strategies and tactics by using social media. Therefore, this research paper will mainly focus on different social media tactics that enhances in formulating successful marketing strategies. Moreover, this study tries to focus on the various social media platforms that contribute significantly to the marketing activities of organization.

## **2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

### **2.1. Social Media and Social Media Marketing**

Social media refers to a collection of online services that helps people connect with friends and family, like-minded people or those with similar interests (Hagel & Armstrong, 1997) and supports social interactions among them and allows them to co-create, find, share, and evaluate the online information repository (Kaplan and Haelein 2009, p.61; Karaduman, 2013; Chua and Banerjee, 2013). Social media is also defined as activities, practices, and behaviors among communities of people, who gather online to share information, knowledge, and opinions using conversational media (Safko and Brake, 2009). Social media is the democratization of information, transforming people from content readers into content publishers. It is the shift from one-to many model to a many-to-many model, which gives personal touch in conversations among business organizations, people, and peers (Neti, S., 2011).

In recent years, social networking sites and social media have increased in popularity. For instance, Facebook is said to have 1.44 billion monthly active users (as of March 31st 2015) since its beginning in 2004 ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)). The unique aspects of social media such as advertising and promotion have accelerated immense popularity to marketing practices (Vinerean et al., 2013). Social media has also influenced consumer behavior from information acquisition to post-purchase behavior such as giving feedback to the company, recommendations to improve products or services, dissatisfaction behaviors or statements and patterns of internet usage (Kaplan and Haelein, 2009). Social media marketing consists of the attempt to use social media to persuade consumers that one's company, products and/or services are worthwhile. Social media marketing is concerned with the application of marketing knowledge, concepts, and techniques to enhance social as well as economic ends (Neti, S. (2011). It is also a form of internet marketing that implements different SNS in order to achieve maximum reach through marketing communication and get brand exposure. Social media marketing basically includes activities such as social sharing of contents, videos, and images for marketing purposes, while it also covers paid social media advertising (Bashar, Ahmad, & Wasiq, 2012). The primary objective of SNS is to share the content / activities in their news feed among their friend circles so that the business organizations increase brand exposure and broaden customer reach across the globe (Divya, & Regi, 2014). Using social media for marketing can enable small business looking to further their reach to more customers as the companies get direct feedback from existing as well as prospective customers while making the company seem more personable. Therefore creating a strong social media marketing plan and presence on the web can bring about remarkable success to the business, if it is implemented properly.

### **2.2. Various objectives of Social Media for Marketing**

The following are the few social media marketing objectives which guides the social media campaigns on the right direction so as to get maximum benefit from it.

- **Finding target audience** – First of all the marketers must determine to whom they are going to target for the social media campaigns. If found difficulties in finding target audience then the businesses must use the various free monitoring tools to track who is talking about the keyword associated with the business such as: Google Analytics, Social Mention, Delicious and Board Reader. These tools helps in finding out the target audience who are interested in the concerned business.
- **Innovative Content** - Like any other areas of online marketing, the content play a vital role in successful social media marketing. The marketers should make sure that the valuable information they offer should be informative as well as entertaining so that it draws the attentions of potential customers. Therefore the marketers should assign best artists to create a variety of content by implementing social media images, videos, and info graphics in addition to classic text-based content.
- **Consistent Brand Image** – The use of social media for marketing enables the concerned business to project its brand image across variety of different social media platforms. On the other hand each platform has its own unique environment and voice, therefore it is very important for the business organizations to keep their brand image consistent so that they don't face any public criticisms. The notion behind maintaining consistent brand image is because social media is viral in nature.
- **Blog** - Blogging is a very influential social media marketing tool which facilitates sharing of a wide array of information and content with readers. The company blog can also serve as the **social media marketing blog**, in which the marketers blog about the recent activities of social media marketing, contests, and events. Blogs allows to write in more depth on subjects that support the marketing effort and which might appeal to the potential audience. The best blogs use a direct and chatty tone of voice and are often more successful when they offer interesting opinions. In most cases, readers can respond and leave comments.
- **Links** – The marketers should always use links in promotional campaigns of their business to share its own unique, original content to gain followers, fans and devotees to outside articles as well. The links which directs to the outer source in fact provides valuable and detailed information which interests the audience and even improves trust and reliability, and in return get some links from the users.
- **Track Competitors** - It's always important to keep a close watch on competitors as they can provide valuable data for keyword research, where to get industry-related links, and other social media marketing insight. This process enhances new and innovative way for doing business so as to make distinct from its competitors. Hence the tracking competitors enhances the business performance in comparison to the competitors.

- **Measure Success with Analytics** – The success of a social media marketing strategy can't be determined without analytics. Google Analytics helps the business to track whether the social media marketing technique is increasing web traffic or not or brand exposure. Hence using tracking tags in social media marketing campaigns, enables the marketers to properly monitor.

### 2.3. Social media platforms for marketing

In fact social media today provides number of platforms for marketing purposes. Business organizations are trying to utilize the social media as best as possible. But there are few social media sites which have really built good image for marketing among the social media users. This paper explains only limited social media platforms as they are used very widely for marketing purposes (figure 1).

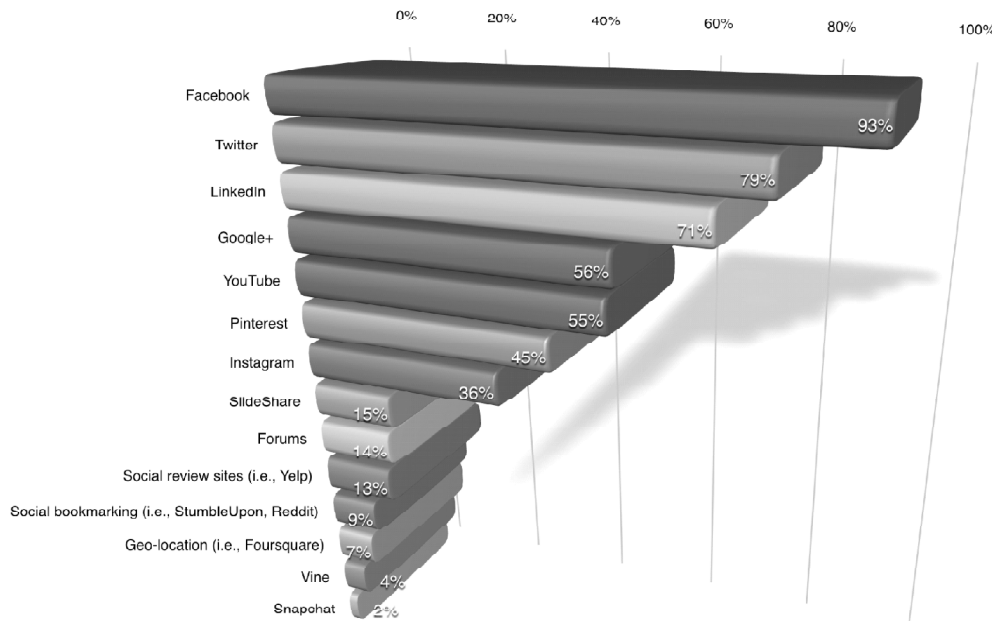


Figure 1: [Source- Social media marketing industry report 2015]

#### Facebook

Facebook is a popular free social networking site which lets registered users to create profiles, upload photos and video, send messages and keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues and so on. Thus this friendly environment facilitates businesses to create Facebook brand fan pages, where the users like this page and constantly follow the page so as to get news feed from the business organizations. Therefore a careful attention should be given to create layout, as the visual component is a key

aspect of the Facebook experience. Social media marketing for business pages revolves around furthering conversation with audiences by posting industry-related articles, images, videos, etc. According to social media marketing report, 93% of all businesses use Facebook as their promotional tool for campaigning.

### **Twitter**

Twitter is a free social media marketing tool which allows registered members to broadcast short posts called tweets. Twitter is also sometime referred to as social networking microblogging service. Twitter members can broadcast their updates (tweets) across the web and follow other users' tweets by using multiple platforms and devices. In Twitter the industry related tweets can be followed which consists of special discounts and new updates with some fun and quirky tweets. This social media marketing tool purely revolves around dialog and communication. According to social media marketing report, 79% of all businesses use Twitter as their promotional tool for campaigning.

### **LinkedIn**

LinkedIn is one of the leading professional network on the web which connects with very professional people with similar nature or similar industries and provides a place to share content with like-minded people. It motivates customers or clients to give business recommendation on concerned LinkedIn profile. Recommendations from the professional members makes the business more credible and reliable for new customers and also it provides various solutions to establish business and earn trust. According to social media marketing report, 71% of all businesses use LinkedIn as their promotional tool for campaigning.

### **Google+**

Google+ is yet another SNS which compete with Facebook and it promotes the same fun, and friendly online environment to connect with other people. Google+ also allows the businesses to upload and share photos, videos and links which could be shared further with other members of Google+ so as to make viral. The businesses can also take advantage of Google+ circles, which allow them to segment their followers into smaller groups, enabling them share information with some followers while barring others. Google+ also facilitates video conferencing with hangouts and many more features in creative ways. According to social media marketing report, 56% of all businesses use Google+ as their promotional tool for campaigning.

### **YouTube**

YouTube is an online public communications site which allows registered members to create and share video contents on the web. This SNS tool can be an incredibly powerful social media marketing tool as many businesses create and share their video

content with the aim of having their video “go viral”. This popular SNS costs very little for getting the products out there and helps in getting ongoing information about new products or services to the same people and new people. According to social media marketing report, 55% of all businesses use YouTube as their promotional tool for campaigning.

### Pinterest

Pinterest is the newly developed social network which allows users to visually share images or videos and find others’ interests and browse what others have pinned. Pinterest is an image-centred platform mostly used by the retailers and small businesses to showcase their products offering. On the other hand they develop their own brand personality with some unique pinboards for the marketing purposes. According to social media marketing report, 45% of all businesses use Pinterest as their promotional tool for campaigning.

## 2.4. Benefits of social media marketing

From the time, the social media has been introduced, the adoption rate of this application has increased to a large extent. As this media connects with customers worldwide, it gives various opportunities as well as benefits for the marketing purposes. Increasing exposure and increasing traffic websites are the top two benefits of social media marketing. The survey report revealed that 90% of all marketers have pointed out that their social media efforts have increased more exposure for their businesses. The second major benefit was increasing website traffic with 77% significant results. The survey report also indicated that developing loyal fans (69%) and gaining marketplace intelligence (68%) were other two important benefits of social media marketing that the most marketers indicated (figure 2).

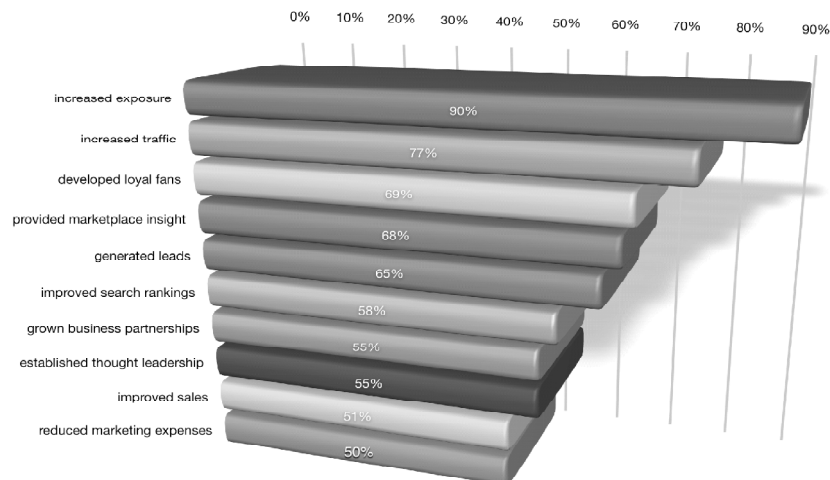


Figure 2: [Source- Social media marketing industry report 2015]

### 3. CONCLUSION

The present study has tried to develop an understanding about the social media marketing, various ways of using media tactics, important social media platforms and the advantages of the social media marketing. From this paper, it has been found that the use of social media is growing with time. Social media marketing is becoming popular among big and medium business organizations whereas small organizations are still hesitant to adopt this. The main reason behind the failure of adoption among small companies is increased costs and lack of IT knowledge. Moreover, many organizations lacked knowledge on marketing using social media. Therefore, this research study has tried to give some insights to the marketers regarding the benefits of using social media for successful businesses.

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