

Social Media as a Marketing Tool : Opportunities and Challenges

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Abstract

It has been observed that Internet technologies and web-based applications are persistently increasing and in the current scenario, technology is more about linking people rather than linking customers. Social media usage has escalated in the past few years, which has made it easier for firms and consumers to intermingle with each other and their friends and make it further easier to communicate with a large audience. In the findings of a study conducted by McKinsey Global Institute, it was revealed that 1.5 billion people use social networking sites, and out of these, 80% interact regularly with other social media users. The popularity of social media has made 70% companies use social media actively. Social media has now reached a place where it is seen as a way of life to socialize and conduct business. However, social media, apart from being an effective tool for interaction, has got risks attached to it. This conceptual paper focused on introducing the key terms, concepts, relevance, benefits, and hazards of employing social media as a marketing instrument. It also aimed to discuss how social media affects a firm's performance and marketing strategy. This paper highlighted the problems that companies may face by adopting social media as a marketing tool and the managerial implications of it with the help of few cases.

Keywords : social media, Web 2.0, online communities, user-generated content

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Facebook registered 1.79 billion monthly active users as of September 2016, reflecting a year over year growth rate of 16% (Forbes, 2016). The number of active Facebook users surpassed 1.7 billion in the third quarter of 2016 (Facebook, 2016). Active users are people who have logged into Facebook in the last 30 days. To put that (1.79 billion) number into consideration, it has surpassed the population of the most populated country in the world, that is, China (1.38 billion) as per Worldometers (2017) and more than five times the population of U.S. (326 million) as of January 2017. In every minute, a content of 300 hours duration gets uploaded on the video sharing site called YouTube (YouTube, 2017) and access to 13 billion photographs was provided by image hosting site Flickr (Flickr, 2017), which made world's renowned Louvre museum's collection tiny in comparison.

As per Pew Research Center's Internet project January omnibus survey, January 23-26, 2014, about 74% of online adults are using social networking sites, participating in reviews on shopping sites, appraising blogs; this reveals a substantial rise from 56% in the year 2007 (Susannah & Rainie, 2014). This growth is not restricted to youngsters either as members of Generation X, 35 - 44 years old join, watch, and offer criticism. Still, many companies are still not able to handle comfortably this online space where consumers can interact freely with each other, and it is found that businesses have minimal regulation over the information accessible to them on these social networks. Customers can read on social networks that children got severe burns due to poorly designed doors of Hasbro's easy bake oven doors in 2007, and Firestone Tire Company was blamed of child labor at their rubber factory. Previously, companies managed to inflate and change the information accessible about them by the strategic announcements in press. In the present era, companies have become mere spectators without being

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equipped with knowledge or the opportunity, or even occasionally, the right to modify publically posted remarks given by their consumers. Wikipedia hence explicitly prevents firms from taking part in its online community. Consumers in the present world are not just submissive beneficiaries in the exchange procedure of marketing. Presently, consumers are performing a dynamic role in the co-creation right from designing of a product to promoting a marketing communication (Berthon, Pitt, McCarthy, & Kates, 2007). According to Weber (2010), nowadays, one funny comment on Twitter, one ingenious post on a blog, one shocking video shared with many friends by a click of the mouse could escalate and eradicate a product or tarnish a company's brand image and decrease its share prices. Though it is explicit that for good or for bad, social media has emerged as a strong marketing and feedback tool, but many executives are still not comfortable to design plans and allot resources to make use of social media as one of its marketing tools. As a result, firms constantly overlook and make a mess of the prospects and challenges presented by innovative customers (Berthon et al., 2007). The possible cause behind this ineptness is a dearth of appropriate knowledge about what actually social media is, and what possible forms can be taken by it (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

With the rise of highly interactive digital media, there has been a significant increase in consumer and customer contact from conventional Web 1.0 platform to extremely interactive Web 2.0 platform through which customers command the nature, content, and perspective of marketing conversations. Today, consumers are increasingly using digital media not as a sole purpose for the search for goods and services, but also to keep the companies engaged from whom they buy and also the other consumers who have equipped some valuable information (Garretson, 2008). With this high growth impetus in social media, it gives the impression that communication has taken a form of democracy. A shift has been observed from marketing personnel in various companies to consumers and various social media groups that create, share, write consumer blogs and entries on Facebook, review movies, share pictures, etc. It is the firms who have to think critically whether they should get serious about social media and become a party in these communications or keep on ignoring it. Both the decisions have a remarkable impact.

This evolution is not surprising. When the Internet started, it was like a massive bulletin board system (BBS) which made Internet surfers share messages, software, and other important news among themselves. The 1990s witnessed an admiring rush in homepages in which everyone was able to share moments of his or her life, and presently, it can be called a blog. Web pages of corporates and e-commerce were launched in 1995 with the introduction of Amazon and e-Bay. It appears as if presently, the social media is nothing but changing the face of the conventional web because it was also created to facilitate the exchange of information among users. However, it does not indicate that social media is nothing but an upgrade version of the World Wide Web, perhaps not! because we will see further in this paper that various technical advancements have been incorporated from the last 20 years, which facilitate sharing virtual content, which is totally distinct from the BBS of the 1970s.

The present paper highlights the threats and prospects that appear from this advancement for companies and offers an arrangement to well comprehend the emerging arena of social media. Further success stories and threats of social media and their effect on firm performance by using social media marketing will be explained with the help of a few cases.

Social Media and Terminologies Associated with it : Web 2.0, User Generated Content (UGC), and Online Communities

Social media, web 2.0, user-generated content, and online communities - these terms are often used interchangeably as they are related to each other closely and are indeed interdependent. However, all these terms are conceptually distinct, and it is very crucial for marketing managers to comprehend the distinctness of each and every term to survive in the global market.

(1) Why Social Media? : Before beginning the discussion on the significance of social media, let us first understand what is social media? As defined by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), “Social Media is a group of Internet-based applications that are build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user - generated content” (p. 61). The Economist Intelligence Unit (Research and analysis wing of the Economist Group) observed that the technology will make customers more powerful in the coming 5 years (Garretson, 2008). Karpinski (2005) termed this power transfer to customers as 'bottom-up-marketing' and considered consumers in the digital world as intelligent, and who trust either self-opinion or the opinion of their peers. This trend of the bottom-up market is due to the "billions of people who create trillions of connections through social media each day" (Hansen, Shneiderman, & Smith, 2010, p.3). These connections establish relationships, which, in turn, form a huge social network consisting of the customer marketplace where companies will never be permitted to interfere.

Keeping marketing performance into consideration, Metcalfe's Law recommends that the worth of a social network grows in percentage to the square of its connections (Shapiro & Varian, 1999). Early 21st century insights from the Cluetrain Manifesto (Levine, Locke, Searle, & Weinberger, 2001) about consumer marketplace, which was later considered as a social media ecosystem, suggest that markets are about conversations, they are not about messages.

According to Levine et al. (2001) :

Conversations are the products the new markets are marketing to one another constantly online. . . .By comparison, corporate messaging is pathetic. It's not funny. It's not interesting. It doesn't know who we are or care. It only wants us to buy. If we wanted more of that, we'd turn on the tube. But we don't and we won't. We're too busy. We're too wrapped up in some fascinating conversation. Engagement in these open free-wheeling marketplace exchanges isn't optional. It's a prerequisite to having a future. Silence is fatal. (p.87)

It can be easily understood that in the current scenario of the digital marketing world, marketing cannot achieve its objective with the old formulae of 'attention via reach'. Marketers should concentrate on capturing and sustaining attention via engagement. This paradigm shift makes it necessary for companies to engage their customers and co-create various products and services through various social media platforms.

(2) Web 2.0 : Web 2.0 first came into presence in 2004 and it was used by end-users and software developers as a new way to make use of the World Wide Web. This is a stage where content, as well as applications, is not generated and published by a single person, but in its place, content and applications are modified on a regular basis by all consumers in a sharing and collaborative fashion. On the other hand, encyclopaedia and content publishing Britannica Online come under the period of Web 1.0, which were further substituted by blogs, wikis, and collective developments in Web 2.0. Web 2.0 requires some basic functions that are necessary to make it interactive like Adobe flash player (to add animations, interactivity with audio and video streams), RSS (really simple syndication, it is used to publish entries from blog, news headlines, which form a part of frequently updated content), and AJAX (Asynchronous Java Script), it is used to recover information from web pages, and at the same time, helps in web content updating without disturbing the presentation and behaviour of the entire page. As far as the present paper is concerned, Web 2.0 is considered as a podium for social media to evolve. It is a technological foundation for social media.

(3) User Generated Content (UGC) : User generated content is well understood as all those ways in which social media is used by people. It gained acceptance in 2005. It is used to explain various types of media content

publically accessible and made by end users. As per OECD (2007), UGC has to fulfill three necessities to be called as such: First, UGC should be published on a publically reachable website or it has to be published on a social networking website which is accessible to a designated group of people. Secondly, a certain amount of creative effort has to be shown. Third, it should be created outside the professional procedures and practices. The first condition does not include the exchanges in e-mails or prompt messages ; second, mere copy of a prevailing content (for example, posting an already existing news without any changes or modifications on a personal blog); all commercial content. It was available before Web 2.0, but technological drivers (enhanced hardware and broadband capacity), economic drivers (availability of tools), and social drivers (e.g., growth in generation of “digital natives” and “screenagers”: youth having sufficient technical expertise and are willing to participate online) have made UGC unlike from what it was known to be in the early 1980s.

(4) Online Communities : Online communities are “social aggregations that emerge from the net when enough people carry on those public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace” (Rheingold, 1993, p.7). According to Bagozzi and Dholakia (2002), the interaction process is, “mediated social spaces in the digital environment that allow groups to form and be sustained primarily through on-going communication process” (p.3). Keeping the technological developments aside, some social factors like individual's need to build a relationship and to be a part of communities also made people gather online and participate in such communities. This preference is known as “desire for social action” (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002) or “re-tribalization” (Adams & Smith, 2008; Cova & Cova, 2002). According to Simmons (2008), online communities are like virtual glue for consumers to overcome their desire to be a part of a group. In the same way, Cova and Cova (2002) identified the power of such connection as linking value, and Balasubramanian and Mahajan (2001) named this concept as organic solidarity. People join these communities to achieve individual and group goals (Dholakia, Bagozzi, & Pearo, 2004) such as self-exhibition (Simmons, 2008), learning through knowledge transfer (Jayanti & Singh, 2010), participation in co-creation and innovation (Fuller, Jaweck, & Muhlbacher, 2007), socialization (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002), and recreation (Molesworth & Denegri-Knott, 2007). There are online brand specific communities (Muniz Jr. & O'Guinn, 2001) which are made to share experiences about the brand and to share information to support its usage.

Social Media Theories and Classification of Social Media

There are two renowned and relevant theories which will be discussed here, first is related to the media part of social media known as social presence theory and second is media richness theory. The social presence theory (Short, Williams, & Christie, 1976) claims that media are distinct from each other by the extent of “social presence” known as the auditory, visual, and physical exchange that can be gained - if they are permitted to evolve - between two communication companions. Social presence is affected by familiarity and immediacy of the medium, and is anticipated lower for intervened (e.g., telephonic conversation) than interpersonal (face to face communication), and for non-concomitant (e.g., e-mail) than concomitant (example live chat) communications. Higher the degree of social presence, the greater will be the social impact that the communication companions have on their behavior. The second theory of social media is also closely related to social presence theory and is called the media richness theory. As per Daft and Lengel (1986), media richness theory relies on the postulation that the objective of any communication is to resolve abstruseness and to reduce ambiguity. The theory states that various media differ from each other by the amount of richness they own, that is, the degree of information allowed to be shared in a stipulated time frame and hence, some media are comparatively more effective as compared to others in terms of resolving abstruseness and reducing ambiguity.

Applying these theories to the social media settings, it is supposed to be the very first sorting that can be made on the basis of social presence and media richness. When we talk about the social dimension of social media, there are

two concepts ; first is self-presentation and self-disclosure. The self-presentation concept enunciates that in all types of social interactions, people try to regulate the impressions other persons have about them (Goffman, 1959). This is done for two reasons. First, to influence others (e.g., making a good impression about your boss) and the second is to create a favorable image suiting their personal identity.

The main reason for creating a personalized web page is probably the desire to be present in the virtual reality or the Internet (Schau & Gilly, 2003). This is achieved via self-disclosure, which means intentional or unintentional disclosure of private information (e.g. adores dislikes) which is reliable with the image that the individual would like to give. To develop a close relationship, self-disclosure is very crucial but it can take place between strangers also. For example, sharing your private difficulties with a person sitting beside you on a train. Combining both the dimensions of social media (social & media), a classification was given by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) in which blogs and collaborative projects scored minimum as they allow only simple exchange, being text based applications. Next tier is social networking (Facebook) sites and content communities (YouTube) which not only enable sharing of text, but also enable sharing of pictures and videos. Virtual games and social worlds are on the highest level (e.g., World of Warcraft) as these replicate all the dimensions of one to one communications in a simulated environment. In the case of self-presentation and self-disclosure, collaborative projects score less than blogs because the former is specific content focused. Similarly, there is more self-disclosure in the case of social networking sites as compared to content communities. In the end, higher self-disclosure is required in case of the virtual social worlds as compared to virtual game worlds.

Social Media Marketing as an Opportunity and Challenge for Firm Performance

As per Wikipedia, Facebook is known to be the most admired social media site in terms of networking, started by Mark Zuckerberg to remain connected with his colleagues of Harvard University. Owing to the great admiration of various social media apps and sites, a term “Facebook Addict” is included in Urban Dictionary, which focuses on developing slang dictionary for the English language. The usage of social networking sites in the formation of brand communities is also very popular among companies (Muniz Jr. & O'Guinn, 2001) or for marketing research in perspective of netnography (Kozinets, 2002). Facebook is even used as a distribution channel by some firms like 1-800-Flowers.com. An option on Facebook is offered called “Gimme Love,” with the help of this widget, users can send “virtual bouquets” to near and dear ones with a single click, which is straightaway sent to the company's website and the company, in turn, sends real flowers. Apart from these enormous opportunities, social media offers some threats also. Opportunities and threats of social media will be discussed with help of a case on each.

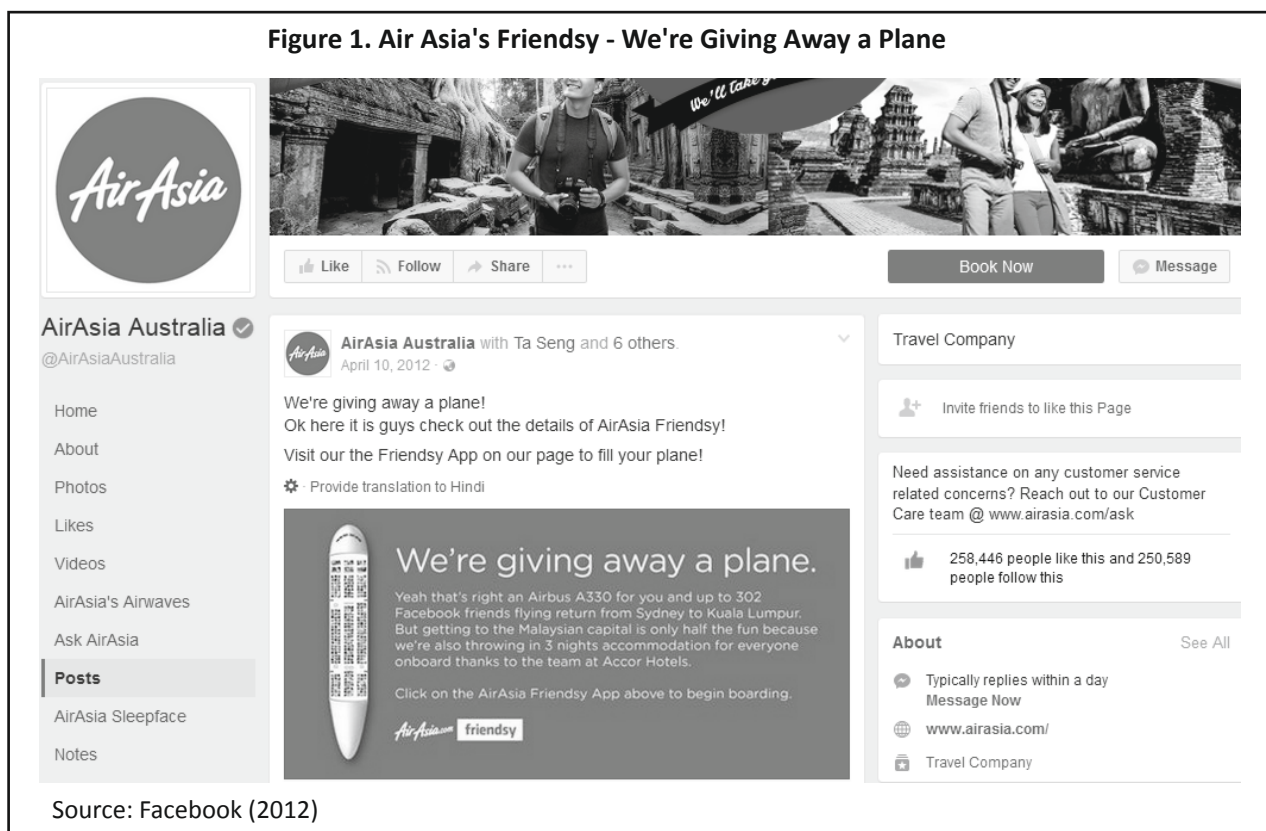
(1) Social Media as an Opportunity - AirAsia's Friendsy - We are Giving Away a Plane! : This case study provides vivid description concerning how a social media movement was framed and implemented with a miniature budget in a short span of time.

(i) The Problem Faced by Them : AirAsia Berhad founded in 1993 is a Malaysian cost-effective airline. It is the world's best cheap-fare airline and is an innovator of low-cost transport in Asia. It was planning to launch a new flight from Australia. There was cut-throat competition in the market, but it lacked funds to compete with an effective advertising campaign. All that was required was a cost effective and faster brand awareness campaign (Elliot, 2014).

(ii) What Did They Do? : AirAsia started a social media marketing campaign, in which it started a competition in which a lucky follower of a Facebook page in Australia and his/her friends (302 in number) were to be rewarded

with a provisional gift of an Airbus A-330-300 aircraft on a Sydney-Kuala Lumpur return flight (Figure 1). The competition made users to choose the friends they wanted to take with them and tag them in a seating plan. A snapshot of the seating plan was shared with the tagged friends. They were also to be given a gift voucher of accommodation of three nights to hang around and enjoy the marvels and reverberations of Kuala Lumpur before their return journey on their secluded plane. All that fans had to do was to participate in the contest via Friendsy application accessible on Facebook page of AirAsia Australia. In this app, they were offered with “pick a seat” map available on AirAsia's website, by which participants could choose the seats for the flight along with their friends manually as well as by an option to fill the seats automatically. The competition was supposed to be the first of such nature to be prearranged in an A330 aircraft. This event was organized to promote the launch of its daily Sydney-Kuala Lumpur flight service on April 2, 2012. The winner's name was declared on June 12, 2012 and the name was given in The Australian on June 19, 2012. According to AirAsia's then CEO, Azran Osman Rani, this initiative was a strategic promotion drive to test social media strength and also to make their airline popular in Australia and nearby regions.

Figure 1. Air Asia's Friendsy - We're Giving Away a Plane



(iii) What Were the Outcomes? : The results of the campaign were extremely motivating and interesting. AirAsia had to double the number of flights. There was an increase of 30% in their Facebook fan base. PR worth \$1.5million was generated and reached 2 million fans on Facebook.

(iv) Why Was it a Grand Success? : This social media promotion campaign of AirAsia was a grand success due to the following reasons :

↳ Enormous potential to be viral.

- ✍ It gave something valuable free of cost.
- ✍ It harnessed the principle of reciprocity.
- ✍ Highly-social - made people to get involved.
- ✍ Innovative idea and campaign “Friendsy-We are giving a plane”, the first of its kind.

(2) Social Media as a Threat - United Breaks Guitars : This case provides a crystal clear picture of customer-co creation and social media as a threat. This case shows that social media is not a one-way marketing promotional tool like advertising, on the contrary, it is a two-way marketing tool whereby customers also participate in advertisements which are not under the control of the company.

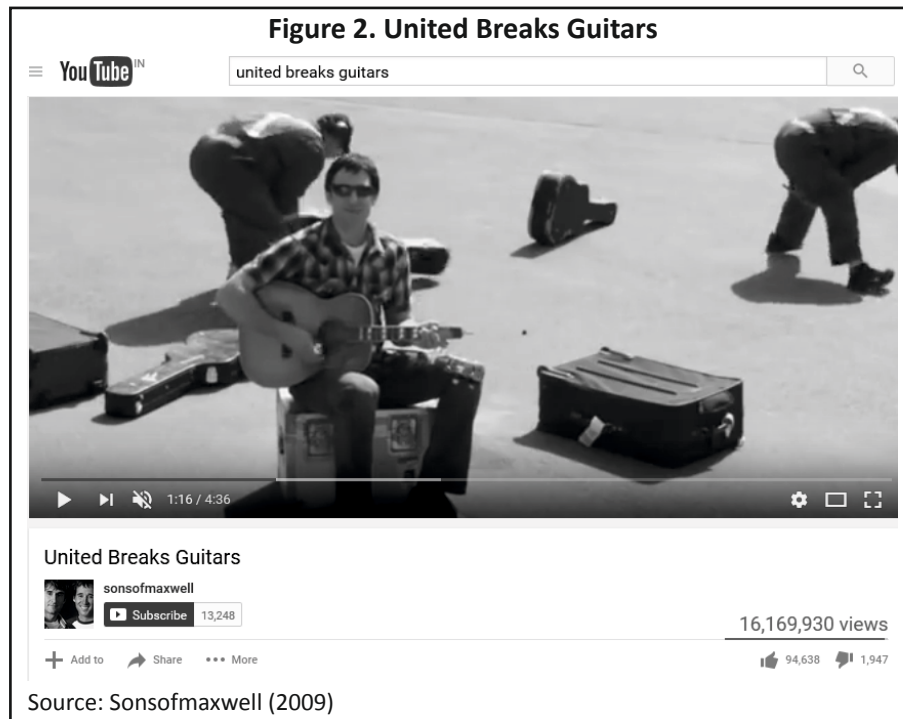
(i) What is “United Breaks Guitars” all About? : It all started on March 31, 2008, Dave Carroll, who is a musician by profession, was traveling via a flight from Halifax to Nebraska passing O'Hare Airport located in Chicago. All that happened during this transit became a matter of disgrace, humiliation, amusement, and changed Carroll from a professional singer to a guru of services. Carroll reported that his guitar was ruthlessly broken by the baggage handlers of United Airlines at O'Hare Airport . He posted three amusing videos on YouTube (Figure 2), sharing his frustrating experience with United Airlines to pursue his damage claim. The overwhelming response to the video raised queries about marketing communications and branding in the Internet era.

(ii) The Incident and Carroll's Response : In Carroll's own words, what happened is described below :

In the spring of 2008, Sons of Maxwell were traveling to Nebraska for a one-week tour and my Taylor guitar was witnessed being thrown by United Airlines baggage handlers in Chicago. I discovered later that the \$3500 710 Taylor guitar was severely damaged. They didn't deny the experience occurred, but for nine months, the various people I communicated with put the responsibility for dealing with the damage on everyone other than themselves and finally said they would do nothing to compensate me for my loss. So I promised the last person to finally say 'no' to compensation (Ms. Irlweg). In my final reply to Ms. Irlweg, I told her that I would be writing three songs about United Airlines and my experience in the whole matter. I would then make videos for these songs and offer them for free download on YouTube and my own website, inviting viewers to vote on their favorite United song. My goal: to get one million hits in one year. (Sterne, 2010, p.140)

(iii) Response to Carroll's Video : The first “United Breaks Guitars” video was uploaded on YouTube on July 6, 2009. Around 1, 50,000+ people viewed this video on the very first day, which forced United Airlines to apologize to Carroll in the hope of covering the disgrace brought to the company. The popular video received more than 5, 00,000 hits by July 9, and five million in August 2009, the number reached 10 million in February 2011 and above 16 million as of January 2017 (Sonsofmaxwell, 2009). The media published the entire incident of the song's immediate success and the public relations embarrassment for United Airlines. In an attempt to cover up the incident, a company spokesman appreciated the video and called it outstanding. The M.D., customer solutions, Rob Bradford, contacted Carroll to apologize for the mistake and requested him if his video could be utilized by them for internal training purposes by United Airlines.

Carroll immediately received two guitars and other props by Bob Taylor, owner of Taylor Guitars for his second video. It was number one video on iTunes, the online music store. Ultimately, United donated \$3,000 to the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz as charity and to maintain its goodwill. United Airlines still couldn't compensate



its tarnished brand image. “United Breaks Guitars” became No.7 on the Top 10 Viral Videos of 2009 list issued by Time Magazine (Fletcher, 2009). “United Breaks Guitars” were shown in a documentary in January 2012, Customer (Dis) Service at CBC/CNBC. In May 2012, *United Breaks Guitars: The Power of One Voice in the Age of Social Media*, a book was published, giving a vivid description of Carroll's experience. In January 2013, German Television and News Service Tagesschau used the success of Carroll's online protest to exemplify the threat that corporations are facing in the social media era.

(iv) Outcomes of the Campaign on United Airlines and Others :

- ✎ A 10% fall was seen in United’s stock prices.
- ✎ A loss of about \$180 million to the stockholders in just 4 days after the video was accessible online.

(v) Implications : Advertisers in the current social media era have to realize it as soon as possible that gone are the days of one-way communication with customers and it is an era of two-way communication and customer co-creation. Companies now have to face the customer who may communicate back for logical motives or otherwise ; customers can make ads for various reasons like desire of creativity expression, self-promotion, or grievance. Advertisers now have limited control over their brand representation as compared to the past. Attitudes in social media era may change overnight.

Justification of the Above Cases from an Indian and Global Perspective : Opportunities & Threats

(1) Justification of Social Media Opportunities : Social media as an opportunity has been depicted by various researchers in the Indian context. According to Sharma (2012), social media has become an important tool to create brand awareness, engage current and prospective buyers by small corporate houses in Delhi. Yadav, Kamboj, and

Rahman (2016) illustrated the importance of social media in co-creation of advertisements with an important campaign during Pepsi IPL-2015 in India. As per Yadav et al. (2016), “the promising response of this campaign also depicts that use of social media in advertisement co-creation can result in enhanced customer engagement, which can eventually lead to enhanced firm performance and sales, enhanced profit, and competitive advantage” (p.267). The motives behind using social media and their usage pattern is also quite valuable in enhancing companies' performance (John, Senith, & Ramson, 2014). Yadav and Rahman (2016) highlighted the crucial role of social media during disaster by disaster mitigation and management companies. Social media technologies, when integrated with existing CRM systems (social CRM), positively enhance companies' performance of Indian IT firms (Kamboj, Yadav, Rahman, & Goyal, 2016) and develop as a firm's distinctive competency. “Why this Kolaveri Di,” which has more than 115 million views since 2011, is also an excellent example from the Indian context which supports the findings of my study. My findings are consistent with the above literature in the Indian context as social media has proven potency around the world.

(2) Justification of Social Media Threats : On the contrary, social media has also made the customers powerful and has destabilized the situation for companies by exposing negative publicity, consumer attacks, and status damage (Horn, Taros, Dirkes, Hüer, Rose, Tietmeyer, & Constantinides, 2015). The advent of social media has roped in several threats to companies (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008). According to Horn et al. (2015), customers can easily create, control, and share content with bigger audience and friends. Such interactions and consumer-created content can be dangerous to companies since consumers take a progressively active role as market players via social media and can reach wider audience (Gronroos, 2008). Hence, the power of customers to blowout rumours or grievances about companies quickly has increased. Consequently, companies find it challenging to respond to consumer attacks (Wikstrom, 1996). The campaign launched by BMW, India “share your #BMWStories” also proved an ultimate failure as they did not target the right audience. The findings (case in consideration) is consistent with above literature that social media can tarnish a company's image if customers are not heard properly, which will eventually affect firm performance.

Managerial Implications

The traditional model of marketing communications has been transformed by technology. The blend of traditional and social media have enabled companies to design integrated communication plans to reach customers on innumerable of platforms and hence enabling a larger span of influence. Although the managers cannot control the dissemination of information through social media, but ignoring the effect of the information disseminated by these social media platforms on consumer behavior is synonymous to surrendering the communication process to the whims and fancies of the marketplace. By adding social media in the promotion mix strategy, these new communication tools are given a place in standard marketing management theories and practices. This new platform for social media aids managers to understand better about social media and a framework for its integration into their IMC strategies, and hence communicate effectively with the target market. Social media marketing is all about creating, persuading, and sharing. It can have an immense effect on performance. The AirAsia campaign “We are Giving Away a Plane” and the “United Breaks Guitars” case offer numerous insights in relation to opportunities and threats of social media and its relevance for companies in the near future about the strategic integration of social media with marketing communication.

Conclusion

Some industry experts claim that if you are not a part of Facebook, YouTube, and Second Life, then you are not

included in cyberspace anymore. Social media helps companies to remain engaged with the consumers directly, timely, and relatively at a lower cost and high efficiency as compared to the traditional communication tools of marketing. This is the reason due to which social media is highly relevant for large MNCs, MSMEs, and even for non-profit governmental agencies.

Social media is not an easy to implement promotional tool, it requires innovative thinking, but possible gains are much more than being insignificant. Dell, for example, used Twitter, a microblogging application, by which short text-based posts of less than 140 characters could be sent, and generated \$1 million in incremental revenue due to sales alerts. Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, MySpace, and several others have drastically changed the face of marketing, advertising, and promotions. Social media has changed the Internet from a platform of information to a platform of influence. It is not adequate to include social media as a sole element of marketing strategy, and companies have to adopt a blend of traditional media and social media as a part of a network, whereby both elements function together to achieve a common goal keeping in mind the threats and opportunities of both medias.

Limitations of the Study, Future Scope, and Industry Trends of Social Media

(1) Limitations & Future Scope of Social Media : The study, as compared to other studies, is not without limitations. First, the study is based on an in-depth analysis of secondary data, but it lacks primary data support. Hence, future studies should include primary/ first hand data to make the study more comprehensive in nature. Second, the research builds on only two cases in an online setting ; hence, further case instances could be integrated and reconsidered in light of my findings. Third, this study covers a limited area of social media and its applications. Future research could study the diversified range of firm performance processes, including financial ramifications (such as the effect of the companies' social media participation on ROI, income, and loyalty dimensions) and innovation over a longitudinal study as compared to a stagnant snapshot. Fourth, the present study considered only two major platforms of social media, that is, YouTube & Facebook. Future studies could utilize other platforms like Twitter, WhatsApp, etc. Lastly, the present study is qualitative in nature which has its own virtues and strengths, and future studies could employ quantitative techniques to achieve deeper insights into social media opportunities and threats.

(2) Industry Trends of Social Media Marketing : In this era of the digital consumer, social media is growing at an unstoppable pace with various updates and a myriad of applications coming in the market. Recent development in social media is mobile social media which has changed the entire way of looking at social media. You will rarely find any mobile phone without the Facebook application. So, mobile social media will be the future of social media in times to come. According to the *Digital Consumer Report* by Nielsen (2014a), 25% of Americans were willing to purchase a new smartphone and more than 49% of the consumers in the age 18-24 were willing to upgrade their smartphones as compared to just 30% in the case of the personal computer. Presently, the emergence of mobile devices has changed social media from PC driven to mobile apps driven social media. People in the U.S., on an average, spent about 30 hours and 15 minutes each month on apps (as of the end of quarter 2013), which is almost double as compared to 18 hrs and 18 mins spent on using apps each month at the end of quarter 2011 (Nielsen, 2014b).

According to *Social Media Marketing Industry Report* (2014), there are seven social media trends, which are as follows (Redsicker, 2014):

- (i) Increased exposure through social media would be beneficial in the times to come.
- (ii) Usage of infographics and memes in marketing via social media is going to increase.

- (iii) Blogging will continue to grow in the future.
- (iv) Google + will remain a key area of interest for marketers.
- (v) Marketers in the near future will try to learn more about podcasting.
- (vi) Facebook will continue to be the most preferred website for advertisements by marketers.
- (vii) Returns on investment of social media will continue to be a mystery.

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